For every child, in every class, there is an excellent teacher.

TASK FORCE FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE

PART I: REPORT TO THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION, Government of Alberta

Submitted to the Hon. Jeff Johnson, Minister of Education, Alberta

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Jeff Johnson, Alberta's Minister of Education, announced the formation of a Task Force for Teaching Excellence (Task Force) on September 11, 2013.

Alberta has a very strong education system – it has served our province and its students very well. So why establish a Task Force on Teaching Excellence? The largest part of the answer rests in *Inspiring Education* – Alberta's long-term vision for education centered on the student. The aspirations set out in *Inspiring Education* can only be achieved by aligning teaching with its vision. The rest of the answer resides in the world around us. Education systems in Canada and around the world are recognizing the importance of teaching excellence, and are evolving to support excellence. Alberta needs to be at the forefront of this change; this will ensure our children have opportunities to succeed in a rapidly changing world. We must determine what is working well and what can be improved. Because teaching is at the core of a successful education system, we must do all we can to achieve teaching excellence.

In establishing the Task Force, Minister Johnson defined the purpose:

> The Task Force will make recommendations on how we can better support Alberta's teachers to ensure that every student has the best chance at success. Consultations will give all Albertans the chance to help build the future of our children's classrooms and opportunities for learning.[1]

The Task Force comprised 16 members representing a broad cross-section of Albertans including students, parents, teachers and academics, in addition to four Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs).

Consistent with the purpose, the Task Force focused on a goal: *for every child, in every class, there is an excellent teacher*. The Task Force focused on the student, with a fundamental belief that teaching excellence is central to the success of our children and youth.

To inform the recommendations, the Task Force undertook a consultation process that was rich and deep. These consultations included an online survey, regional sessions, an online bulletin board, focused dialogues, written submissions from stakeholders, and one-on-one meetings. More than 3,000 Albertans participated in consultations, including students, parents, teachers, administrators, trustees and other members of the public.

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1 News release: http://alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=3494688E638B3-F818-2042-38963D68FB752D43

Albertans told the Task Force that teaching excellence starts with dedicated and talented teachers. But teaching excellence is about more than this. Building a culture of teaching excellence involves the entire system and everyone in it. Four key themes emerged, reflecting the need to:

- Define expectations for teaching excellence
- Enable teachers to achieve excellence
- Define the role of leaders in teaching excellence
- Assure teaching excellence

All recommendations were considered through the lens of Alberta's vision for education – *Inspiring Education* – and always with the student in mind.

Let us describe the recommendations.

Central to achieving teaching excellence is a definition of excellence and clear expectations for practice. Practice standards – the foundation of the profession – provide a framework and principles that inform the attributes, skills, and knowledge required by teachers. The Task Force recommends that the existing practice standard for teachers be revised to align with *Inspiring Education* and with the other recommendations in this report. We further recommend that, for school leaders and district leaders also, practice standards be formally adopted to ensure clarity of expectations and alignment with *Inspiring Education*.

The second theme was how to enable teachers to become excellent. The Task Force examined how to attract and prepare teachers, how teachers enter the profession, how to develop and retain experienced teachers, and how to support teachers.

Who is admitted to teacher preparation programs and how they are educated have a significant impact on the quality of teaching. The Task Force recommends attracting individuals with a broad diversity of skills and talents to the teaching profession. To strengthen teacher preparation programs, the Task Force makes recommendations to ensure their alignment with *Inspiring Education*, and to strengthen classroom experience (i.e., longer and earlier practicums).

To address the high level of attrition in the early years of teaching and to accelerate teacher growth, the Task Force makes two recommendations: the introduction of a mandatory one-year internship (i.e., articling) program, similar to that of other professions, and a provincewide mentorship framework for beginning teachers.

The Task Force recommends revisions to the *Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy* to help achieve teachers' professional growth and teaching excellence. It is also important that practice excellence be recognized in a meaningful and tangible way. A recommendation supports recognition of excellent teachers and encourages them to contribute their talents more broadly.

On how best to support teachers, the most consistent theme expressed by teachers was the provision of time – time for professional learning (professional development), collaboration, sharing of best practices, and empowering innovation. Further, the Task Force believes that the structure of professional learning needs to be effective and aligned with *Inspiring Education*.

Regarding the theme of leadership, principals have the greatest impact on teaching excellence, next to teachers themselves. The right principal can propel a school forward, creating an environment in which teaching excellence flourishes. But there is little guidance on how to select such principals, no required leadership preparation program, and inconsistent access to mentorship. The Task Force makes recommendations in each of these areas to ensure the right people are appointed to leadership positions and are provided the foundation to succeed. The Task Force further recommends the development of frameworks for growth, supervision and evaluation of principals and superintendents, similar to the recommendations for teachers.

The final theme examined by the Task Force was assurance of effective practice: do our assurance systems align with and support teaching excellence? The Task Force had several concerns about the system that assures the conduct and competence of teachers. Conduct relates to the professional behavior of the teacher, while competence relates to the effectiveness of a teacher. As conduct and competence are very different, the Task Force recommends these issues be dealt with through different processes.

For issues of conduct, the Task Force believes that the existing system requires greater openness, transparency, timeliness, fairness and efficiency. If the interests of students truly come first, we require an open and transparent system that is accessible and understandable to parents and students.

On issues of competence, the Task Force recommends a very different system than the one currently in place. We recommend the introduction of a system of maintenance of certification for teachers to assure career-long growth, currency, and competency. An evaluation every five years would determine whether a teacher's certification to teach should be maintained.

The Task Force makes recommendations related to school leaders which parallel those for teachers. There needs to be an accountability and feedback structure for principals similar to that proposed for teachers, including a maintenance of designation for school leaders.

The recommendations of this report envision a far greater human resource role for the principal. The Task Force recommends principals be empowered to support our recommendations.

Finally, several recommendations in this report will require greater involvement by the Ministry of Education in professional functions. The Task Force recommends the current model of shared responsibility for professional functions between the Ministry of Education and the Alberta Teachers' Association be retained, with appropriate modifications to implement the recommendations of this report. If those modifications cannot be made under the existing model, the Task Force recommends that either a Ministry-based model for professional functions or a separate professional teachers' college be considered by the Minister of Education.

The Task Force believes adoption of its recommendations will help Albertans to achieve the vision of *Inspiring Education* and to position our children for success in the world. These recommendations will ensure that:

For every child, in every class, there is an excellent teacher.

1 INTRODUCTION

The role of teaching excellence in Alberta's vision for education

In 2010, Albertans shared their thoughts on the future of education in Alberta, set down in the report *Inspiring Education*. But *Inspiring Education* is more than a report. It's a vision – a new way of looking at education and the world. It reflects the consensus of Albertans that we desire our students to become engaged thinkers and ethical citizens, with an entrepreneurial spirit. We now talk with considerable clarity, not about what is best for the system, but about what is best for the student.

The Government of Alberta has taken positive steps in moving our education system toward the vision of *Inspiring Education*. It has introduced a new *Education Act* and is reviewing and updating programs and policies related to student learning outcomes, curriculum design, high school credentialing, inclusive education and student assessment.

But *Inspiring Education* also put forth that the most important factor in student success, outside of parents and family, is the teacher and teaching excellence. Albertans said teachers have to be more flexible, innovative and learner-centered. They said the role of the teacher must change from that of a knowledge authority to an architect of learning – one who plans, designs and oversees learning activities.

So what does that mean for the teacher as an individual? What does that mean for the broader education community? Our expectations for teachers have changed and will change significantly under Alberta's new vision for education.

The Task Force for Teaching Excellence

To address these questions, Minister of Education Jeff Johnson announced the creation of the Task Force for Teaching Excellence on September 11, 2013. The Task Force comprised 16 members who have a passion for, and a commitment to, education in Alberta. They represented a cross-section of Albertans including students, parents, teachers and academics, and four MLAs. Biographies of Task Force members are included in Appendix B. The Task Force Terms of Reference are included in Appendix C.

The Task Force was asked to make recommendations to better support teaching excellence and to ensure success for every student. The recommendations contained in this report will inform the intent and content of new provincial legislation and related regulations and policies.

Development of the report

The Task Force focused on a goal of:

> ***For every child, in every class, there is an excellent teacher.***[2]

We believe every student is entitled to high-quality learning that is centered on his or her needs. It is through this lens – the needs of the child – that this report was drafted.

In its first meetings, the Task Force agreed its scope should be interpreted as broadly as possible – that everything related to teaching excellence should be on the table – including the role of the teacher, educational leaders, and the broader system. We agreed to be bold and consider all potential opportunities for change. We agreed that discussions and recommendations should be evidence driven, and focused on the long-term fundamentals, and not focused on implementation. That is, we did not focus on political feasibility, or existing collective agreements and legislation. Overall, the Task Force lived by these principles.

Several meetings were spent developing common understandings. We examined information related to Alberta's system of education, and other education systems both within Canada and internationally. We read and read some more – an extensive bibliography is included in Appendix I. We also commissioned two environmental scans to inform our work: *Summary of Professional Disciplinary Processes and Statistics for Selected Occupations in Alberta*, prepared by Applications Management Consulting Ltd., and *An Environmental Scan on Education Professions and Occupations*, also prepared by Applications Management Consulting Ltd.

The consultation process of the Task Force, as discussed in the following section and in the *Part II: What We Heard Report*, was extensive and multifaceted. The process included an online survey, regional sessions, online bulletin boards, focused dialogues, written submissions from stakeholder organizations, and one-on-one meetings. The consultations helped us both to identify issues and inform recommendations.

Finally, we deliberated on our recommendations.

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2 The word "class" is used broadly in this statement. It is intended to suggest any environment in which students learn.

2 CONTEXT FOR CHANGE

> No education system can remain static. The world is changing rapidly. Technology is transforming our lives. The skills needed in the future will be very different from those needed today.[3]
>
> Lee Hsien Loong, Prime Minister of Singapore

As all economies grow more knowledge-based, diverse and yet interconnected, the next generation will be called to innovate, create and compete as never before. How will the world respond? How will Alberta respond? We must consider what's happening both at home and abroad.

Inspiring Education

Albertans are fortunate to have a publicly-funded education system widely regarded as one of the best in the world. However, while successful, we can't afford to rest on our past accomplishments. That is why the Government of Alberta, in collaboration with education stakeholders, is pursuing a vision of education called *Inspiring Education*. The vision emphasizes the development of key competencies and cultivates students as engaged thinkers, and ethical citizens with entrepreneurial spirits (the 3E's):

- **Engaged thinker:** one who thinks critically and makes discoveries; who uses technology to learn, innovate, communicate, and discover; who works with multiple perspectives and disciplines to identify problems and find the best solutions; who communicates these ideas to others; and who, as a life-long learner, adapts to change with an attitude of optimism and hope for the future.
- **Ethical citizen:** one who builds relationships based on humility, fairness and open-mindedness; who demonstrates respect, empathy and compassion; and who through teamwork, collaboration and communication contributes fully to the community and to the world.

3 *The Learning Curve: Lessons in Country Performance in Education* (Pearson PLC, 2012) p.38 (http://thelearningcurve.pearson.com/)

- **Entrepreneurial spirit:** one who creates opportunities and achieves goals through hard work, perseverance and discipline; who strives for excellence and earns success; who explores ideas and challenges the status quo; who is competitive, adaptable and resilient; and who has the confidence to take risks and make bold decisions in the face of adversity.

To achieve this vision, the entire education system, including the role of the teacher, must undergo significant shifts.

"What" teachers do must shift from the dissemination of information and recall of facts to a greater focus on inquiry and discovery. In the future, teachers will use a curriculum that allows for more interdisciplinary learning, combining the arts and other academic streams. Teachers will continue to focus on supporting students to develop the attitudes, skills, knowledge, and values required for life-long learning.

"How" teachers and the education system function must shift as well, placing children and youth at the centre of all decisions related to learning. Children and youth will be supported as individuals – emotionally, intellectually, physically, socially and spiritually. Their personal interests, curiosities, and strengths will be taken into account. Curriculum will be relevant and available in a variety of forms, and experienced in-person or virtually, collaboratively or independently, and at one's own pace.

Additionally, the community must become a true partner in education. The community is a source of leadership, expertise, and support. Leadership will be recruited from a variety of organizations including the business community, post-secondary institutions, not-for-profit organizations, and cultural groups.

Through *Inspiring Education*, Albertans were clear that teachers must achieve excellence to inspire the same level of achievement in students. Other than parents and families, Albertans see the teacher as the single most important contributor to student success. How we prepare teachers and how we assure teaching excellence will change to align with the shifts described in *Inspiring Education*.

While *Inspiring Education* establishes the high-level direction for education, it does not lay out how to achieve this vision. It recognizes the importance of teaching excellence to achieving its vision, while being open on how teaching excellence is to be achieved. This report provides further direction.

Alberta's place in the world

Alberta's education system is strong. In fact, we have been among the world's leaders in reading, science and mathematics. Alberta students have met or exceeded overall national and international average results in the following international studies: Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) sponsored by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development in 2000, 2003, 2006, 2009 and 2012; Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) in 2006 and 2011; and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study in 1995, 1999, 2007, and 2011.

While Alberta continues to perform well internationally, Alberta's average PISA scores have declined over the last nine years. The 2012 PISA results show that Alberta's students continue to do well in math, reading and science, although on a relative basis other countries and provinces have passed or closed the performance gap with Alberta. Simply stated, other jurisdictions are evaluating and changing their education systems to improve educational outcomes.

The pace of change in education systems has increased, with systems around the world critically evaluating what is working, and what can be made better. In a call to action Andreas Schleicher, Special Advisor on Education Policy to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Secretary-General and Deputy Director for Education, stated:

> The world has become indifferent to tradition and past reputations, unforgiving to frailty and ignorant to custom or practice. Success will go to those individuals and nations that are swift to adapt, slow to complain, and open to change. The task for educators and policy makers is to ensure that countries rise to this challenge.[4]

Alberta has a solid foundation to build upon. We are strong in our educational performance, but can become even stronger. Our children can lead in the emerging world. To maintain our standing in the world, we need classrooms and learning environments that are intellectually vibrant and robust, and where imaginative, creative, and discipline-based work engages the hearts, the minds and the hands of students. By supporting teachers to strive for and maintain excellence, we will ensure Alberta students are enabled to lead in a global society. Alberta needs to be at the forefront of change.

To summarize, while Alberta has a very successful education system, there are imperatives for change; we need to achieve the vision and promise of *Inspiring Education* to ensure our children have opportunities to succeed in a rapidly changing world.

4 Andreas Schleicher, "*The Five Things I've Learned*" (Pearson Foundation, 2012) [http://www.thefivethings.org/andreas-schleicher/]

3 CONSULTATIONS WITH ALBERTANS

A critical element of the Task Force review was listening to Albertans, including the voices of individual teachers. To maximize participation, the Task Force undertook an extensive series of consultations and used a variety of methods to gather input. Three thousand Albertans contributed to the consultations, including a significant number of teachers and educational leaders. All input was captured and later considered as part of our deliberations. While consultations were originally scheduled to close at the end of November, they were extended to mid-December to accommodate as many Albertans as possible. Albertans had a further opportunity to provide input during the *Inspiring Education* Symposium held in Calgary on February 19, 2014.

Leger - The Research Intelligence Group was contracted to support the Task Force. It assisted with three major components of the consultation – an online survey; regional sessions, including those conducted specifically with First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples; and a series of online bulletin board discussions with Albertans.

Consultation methods

The Task Force used seven different methods to engage as many Albertans as possible:

- an online survey
- regional consultations
- online bulletin boards
- focused dialogues
- written submissions from stakeholder organizations
- one-on-one meetings
- questions posed at the *Inspiring Education* Symposium

Consultations were publicized in a variety of ways to maximize public and educator awareness and participation.

Participation

The **online survey** was open to all Albertans. A total of 2,197 Albertans participated between October 1 and November 17, 2013. The breakdown of participants[5] included: teachers (22 per cent); parents (17 per cent); former students (14 per cent); district and school leaders (13 per cent); and others including school support staff, employers, current students and the general public.

The number of participants is considered a robust sample when compared to similar studies collecting information on the opinions and attitudes of Albertans. Survey questions focused on teaching, leadership, and the overall system.

Regional consultations were conducted in October and November 2013 with 700 people in attendance. Task Force members travelled in small teams to communities throughout the province, hearing firsthand the views of Albertans. The breakdown of participants included: teachers (37 per cent); school and district leaders (21 per cent); parents (12 per cent) and others including students, employers and the general public.

Consultations were held in: Vermilion, Grande Prairie, Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, Brooks, Red Deer, Hinton, Fort McMurray, Athabasca, Fort Vermilion, Calgary, and Edmonton; and with First Nations, Métis and Inuit representatives in Lac La Biche, Bonnyville and Edmonton.

Online bulletin boards generated discussion among112 participants representing three distinct groups: educators (68 per cent); parents (19 per cent) and students (13 per cent).

Small groups of Task Force members held **focused dialogues** with senior representatives of stakeholder organizations, including, but not limited to, organizations that represent teachers, parents and system governance. In addition to focused dialogues, stakeholder organizations and individuals made **written submissions** to the Task Force.

Task Force members also held **one-on-one meetings** with individuals who have expertise and/or interest in specific aspects of education.

Eleven hundred participants at an ***Inspiring Education*** **Symposium** in Calgary (February 19, 2014) responded to two questions related to teaching excellence.

What we heard

Consultations findings have been incorporated into the recommendations sections of this report. A more complete summary of findings is provided in: *Part 1: What We Heard – Community and Stakeholder Consultation*.

5 Only stakeholders with the largest percentage of participants are identified here and throughout this document. As a result, percentages will not add up to 100.

4 WHAT IS TEACHING EXCELLENCE?

Teaching excellence is achieved through a system that ensures that:

For every child, in every class, there is an excellent teacher.

To achieve this goal, we must articulate clear expectations for teacher practice that align with the vision of *Inspiring Education*. These expectations must be set out in practice standards for educators. The standards must underpin a culture of teaching excellence encompassing the entire education system and everyone in it. The standards must enable teachers to achieve excellence, and they must empower leaders at the school and district levels to support and assure teaching excellence.

But first the Task Force examined the role of teachers generally. Of course, teachers are central to a system of teaching excellence. Anyone who has observed a teacher knows that teaching is an enormously complex profession. Teachers are expected to instruct children from all backgrounds, with varying skills, abilities and interest in learning. They are expected to promote effective learning for a diversity of learners within a system that provides varying levels of support.

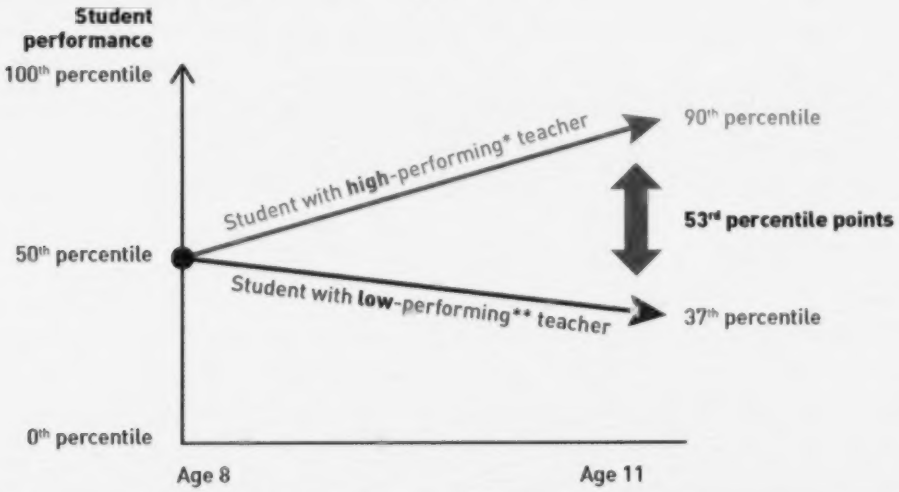
Evidence shows that how teachers do this matters. In fact, the impact of a good teacher can be huge. In a study of 2.5 million American school children, economists Raj Cherry, John Friedman, and Jonah Rockoff found that students assigned to better teachers (as measured by their impact on students' test scores) earned more income as adults, were more likely to attend college, and were less likely to have children as teenagers. They also found that the differences between poor and average teachers can be as important as the differences between average and superior teachers. As they write:

> Replacing a (bottom 5 per cent) teacher with an average teacher would increase the present value of students' lifetime income by more than $250,000 for the average classroom in our sample.[6]

6 Raj Chetty, John N. Friedman, and Jonah E. Rockoff, "The Long-Term Impacts of Teachers: Teacher Value-Added and Student Outcomes in Adulthood," NBER Working Paper (National Bureau of Economic Research, 2011).

Another study also found that teacher quality has a substantial impact on student performance. It showed that, on average, two students with average performance (50 percentile) would diverge by more than 50 percentile points over a three year period depending on the quality of the teacher they were assigned. Diagram 1 illustrates the findings.

DIAGRAM 1: The effect of teacher quality[7]



*Among the top 20% of teachers; **Among the bottom 20% of teachers

Analysis of test data from Tennessee showed that teacher quality effected student performance more than any other variable; on average, two students with average performance (50th percentile) would diverge by more than 50 percentile points over a three year period depending on the teacher they were assigned.

Participants in Task Force consultations often cited the key attributes of excellent teachers as competence, expertise, and the ability to build relationships with students. Participants, including teachers, parents, educational leaders and others, all agreed that excellent teachers teach, think and behave in a manner that showcases the best of themselves and brings out the best in their students. Participants in the consultations said that excellent teachers are:

- Passionate about teaching and learning. For example, students participating in Speak Out (an *Inspiring Education*-related forum for students) described a great teacher this way: "If a student doesn't understand a concept, a great teacher will make time to help or find another way to teach it to ensure the student understands. Teachers need to be passionate about their jobs and put the effort into making sure students are learning."[8]

7 Sanders and Rivers *Cumulative and Residual Effects on Future Student Academic Achievement*, McKinsey

8 Government of Alberta, Speak Out, *What We Heard: Quality Teaching* (2011), p.5

- Enthusiastic, motivational, inspiring and engaging. For example, students participating in Speak Out also described a great teacher in this way: "Teachers who mix things up regularly, move from individual learning to group-based projects or incorporate outdoor workshops, indoor classes, fitness-based classes, etc., help keep students interested and engaged."[9]
- Knowledgeable, intelligent, and educated. Students participating in Speak Out said this about the ideal teacher: "The ideal teacher is knowledgeable and passionate about the subject he or she is teaching. The teacher is able to bring real life examples into the classroom to make the learning more applicable for students. The teacher is able to incorporate personal knowledge and experience into the lesson plans and is able to effectively respond to student questions."[10]
- Compassionate, empathetic, caring, kind, understanding, and relationship builders. For example, a student participating in Task Force consultations said: "Truly having a good teacher is to be able to connect with him or her and their teaching method. More than just the way he or she teaches, but on a personal level as well. To be able to connect with someone will truly make it easier to understand what they are saying and to comprehend material in depth."

Many of the stakeholder organizations' submissions to the Task Force expressed the need for a clear description of teacher excellence that can form the basis of practice standards for teachers. Fortunately, *Inspiring Education* provides us with a clear vision – a vision largely consistent with what is described above. Within an *Inspiring Education* world, teacher excellence is defined by the teacher's ability to develop students who are engaged thinkers and who have the knowledge and the wisdom to be ethical citizens with an entrepreneurial spirit (the 3E's). To achieve excellence on an individual level, the professional development and ongoing learning of teachers must be aligned with the 3E's.

Inspiring Education described two key characteristics of teacher excellence as:

- Expertise as a creator of knowledge. Quite opposed to acting as content experts, teachers must act as architects of learning to achieve the 3E's:
    - To support students in becoming engaged thinkers, it is expected that teachers will know how knowledge is created through inquiry, reflection, exploration, experimentation and trial and error. Teachers will model, guide, and facilitate knowledge sharing, helping students become creators of knowledge.
    - Similarly, to support students as ethical citizens, teachers must know how to develop environmental, economic, cultural, social and political literacy in students.
    - To support students in entrepreneurship, teachers must know how to identify, develop and bring ideas to life and to take risks in learning.

9 Government of Alberta, Speak Out, *What We Heard: Success Through Quality Teaching* (2012), p.8

10 Government of Alberta, Speak Out, *What We Heard: Quality Teaching* (2011), p.5

- Ability to work with others. As teachers guide the learning of each individual student within an increasingly diverse population, they must collaborate with other educators to identify best practices.
    - To support engaged thinking, they must integrate ideas, subject disciplines, local context, and community values into meaningful and relevant learning experiences.
    - To support ethical citizenship, they must reflect upon action and practice in collaboration with others.
    - To support entrepreneurship, teachers must build community support structures and create innovative learning environments.

The major shifts in teaching under *Inspiring Education* are outlined in Table 1.

Most importantly, the **teacher isn't alone** in this endeavour. It is everyone's responsibility to create a culture that nurtures, supports and sustains learning excellence and teaching excellence. Everyone – from government to the community to every employee in every school, district and stakeholder organization – must be dedicated to achieving the ideals of engagement, ethical behaviour and entrepreneurship.

TABLE 1 – How *Inspiring Education* shifts teaching[11]

LESS	MORE
• Imparting of knowledge	• Creation of knowledge
• Implementation	• Designing, innovating, and inventing
• Conventional	• Customized and unique
• Working alone	• Working together
• Authority and management	• Guidance and empowerment
• Reliance	• Independence
• Static	• Dynamic
• Focus on content	• Focus on competency building through content
• Standardized assessment – quantitative measures	• Diverse assessment – formative and summative measures
• Structured and restrictive	• Accessible and participatory
• Technology supporting teaching	• Technology enabled learning
• Participation in Ministry-led initiatives	• Participation in local and global initiatives

11 Ministry of Education, *Inspired Teachers* [draft concept paper], 2013.

5 SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

This section provides an overview of the Task Force recommendations. The full recommendations, as well as their rationale, consultation findings and supporting research, are provided in Sections 6 through 9.

As the Task Force discussed opportunities to achieve teaching excellence, four key themes emerged: defining expectations around teaching excellence; enabling teachers to achieve excellence; the role of leaders in enabling teaching excellence; and the assurance of teaching excellence.

Recommendations related to these four themes were informed by the following. First, students came first in all our discussions. Our education system exists for students, and recommendations must be solely in their interest. Second, our recommendations must be consistent with, and empower, Alberta's vision for education from *Inspiring Education*. As stated in the Task Force Terms of Reference:

> Recommendations will align with the vision, values, guiding principles and policy shifts of *Inspiring Education* to provide for legislation and practice that will **enable and assure teacher excellence** and ensure educators will be innovative and current in their practice.[12]

An implication of our report is that there needs to be greater harmonization of practice standards and core elements of education affecting teaching excellence. Equally important, and an assumption made throughout this report (sometimes implicit and sometimes stated), is that the community context must also be considered when making decisions that affect students.

Practice standards

Where do we set out what we expect of teachers and educational leaders? This is the function of practice standards.

Practice standards are the foundation of all professions. They define expectations and outcomes. Practice standards provide a framework and principles that inform the attributes,

12 Appendix C, Task Force Terms of Reference.

skills and knowledge required of professionals. In consultations, there was strong support for formal provincial practice standards – aligned with *Inspiring Education* – for teachers, school leaders, and district leaders.

The Task Force makes four recommendations on practice standards, as presented in detail in Section 6 of this report. The Task Force recommends the existing practice standard for teachers, the *Teaching Quality Standard*, be revised to align with *Inspiring Education* and with the other recommendations in this report (Recommendation 1). We further recommend that practice standards be formally adopted for school and district leaders (Recommendations 2 and 3). An additional recommendation is made to ensure that these practice standards are regularly reviewed and updated (Recommendation 4).

These recommendations ensure that expectations for teachers and educational leaders are clearly articulated and fully aligned with achieving teaching excellence and *Inspiring Education*. Because many of our other recommendations are directly tied to practice standards (e.g., assuring excellence for teachers will be measured against the revised *Teaching Quality Standard*), it is critical that practice standards rigorously and clearly define expectations.

Enabling teaching excellence

The second theme we focused on was enabling teaching excellence. Teachers play a critical role in our society, imparting knowledge and facilitating learning. However, this role is evolving under *Inspiring Education*. How do we enable teachers to achieve excellence in this evolving role?

The Task Force examined three key areas: how we attract, prepare and induct (introduce to the profession) new teachers; how we develop and retain experienced teachers; and how we support teachers. Full recommendations and analysis are provided in Section 7.

Attract, prepare, and induct

The foundation for a successful system is established in who we attract and how we prepare people for the teaching profession. These have a profound impact on our education system.

HOW WE ATTRACT

How do we attract individuals with a diversity of skills and talents to the teaching profession? The criteria for choosing who will enter teacher preparation programs have a direct impact on the profession and on teaching excellence. The Task Force encourages teacher preparation programs to look beyond grades in discerning those who are most suitable for careers in teaching. Other relevant criteria might include the ability of applicants to make connections with students, as well as diversity of backgrounds (Recommendation 5). To further increase the diversity of skills and talents in the teaching profession, the Task Force believes there should be additional pathways to

becoming a teacher, particularly for those in the trades, fine arts, and other professions (Recommendation 6). The Task Force further recommends changes that will provide greater flexibility for schools to use community-based experts. This would occur through revisions to the system of Letters of Authority which authorize those without certification to provide instruction under the supervision of the principal.

HOW WE PREPARE

Alberta's teacher preparation programs have provided a foundation for teaching excellence. However, given the changes envisioned by *Inspiring Education*, the Task Force discussed whether teacher preparation programs are evolving to keep up with those changes. We recommend that the Ministry of Education work with Alberta's teacher preparation institutions to ensure alignment of their programs with *Inspiring Education* (Recommendation 7). This may be accomplished through an annual discussion facilitated by the Ministry of Education.

To prepare those in teacher preparation programs to teach, Alberta requires those students have hands-on classroom experience (practicums). The Task Force recommends students gain experience earlier in their teacher preparation program (or even before entering their program). This would give prospective teachers an insight into teaching and help them determine whether teaching is the right profession for them (Recommendation 8). We further recommend that practicums occur in each year of the teacher preparation program, and that the minimum requirement for successful practicum program completion for teacher certification be extended beyond the current 10 weeks.

INDUCTION

The Task Force is concerned about the high level of attrition in the teaching profession, particularly in teachers' early years. The Task Force believes it is important to provide the greatest opportunity for success, and for growth, in the first years of teaching practice. Therefore, we recommend the introduction of a mandatory one-year paid internship (i.e., articling) program, similar to that of other professions (Recommendation 9). The intern would have a reduced teaching load with commensurate salary. This would give the intern additional time to focus on building competencies, confidence, and teaching skills.

The Task Force further believes that mentorship is critical to teacher development. The Task Force recommends the development of a provincewide mentorship framework for those in the early years of their teaching career (Recommendation 10).

Develop and retain experienced teachers

As with all professions, there is an expectation that teachers will continue to develop their practice to remain current and competent. It is also important that excellent teachers take on other roles through which they can contribute to the profession and Alberta's education system.

ONGOING DEVELOPMENT

Perhaps nothing is more important to achieving teaching excellence than professional growth and development. The Task Force has concerns – widely shared by participants in the consultations – that the current *Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy* is not effective and needs to be significantly modified (Recommendation 11). Specifically, a teacher's professional growth plan should be jointly developed with the principal, be aligned with the broader goals of the school, district and community, and demonstrate professional growth, currency and competency. Further, the Task Force believes it is critical that meaningful feedback on the teacher's plan be provided each year.

RECOGNIZING EXCELLENCE

The Task Force believes that truly excellent teachers are not sufficiently recognized and provided opportunities to share their expertise. Consistent with consultation findings, and with practices in many other leading jurisdictions, the Task Force recommends a special designation be awarded to those who consistently demonstrate teaching excellence (Recommendation 12). These individuals would be encouraged to contribute their expertise in areas such as mentorship, collaboration, and in supporting individuals in practicums and internships, with appropriate resources provided.

TEACHER SUPPORT

The Task Force received considerable feedback on teacher supports. We focused our attention on the nature and adequacy of support (Recommendation 13). Clearly, support for teachers needs to be rethought. The Task Force recommends the Ministry of Education engage in consultation with key stakeholder organizations to address these issues.

The most consistent theme expressed by teachers was the need for time – time for planning, professional development, collaborating, sharing best practice, and empowering innovation (Recommendation 14). The Task Force recommends that the professional learning (professional development) structure for teachers be examined to ensure it is effective and aligned with *Inspiring Education*.

The role of leaders[13] in enabling teaching excellence

The third theme we focused on was leadership. Next to teachers, school leaders, particularly principals, have the greatest impact on teaching excellence. Great principals motivate and support teachers, monitor and evaluate their practice, and assist them with their professional growth. Most importantly, they create an environment and culture that leads to teaching excellence. Several recommendations related to leadership parallel or correspond with recommendations to enable teachers to achieve excellence. The full recommendations are presented in Section 8. The Task Force focused on how school leaders are attracted, prepared and inducted, and how they are developed and retained.

13 Throughout this document, unless otherwise specified, school leaders refer to principals, assistant principals, associate principals, and vice principals. District leaders refer to superintendents, assistant superintendents and associate superintendents.

Attract, prepare and induct school leaders

WHO WE ATTRACT

The right principal can propel a school forward, creating an environment in which teaching excellence flourishes. But not all school authorities have the knowledge and resources required to make optimum human resource decisions. The Task Force therefore recommends the development of a provincewide framework for the identification and selection of school leaders (Recommendation 15).

HOW WE PREPARE

Equally important to choosing the right principal is providing the right support for success. The Task Force recommends the development of a mandatory leadership preparation program for school leaders (Recommendation 16). We further recommend the development of a mentorship framework for both school and district leaders (Recommendation 17).

Developing and retaining leaders

There is an expectation that school and district leaders will demonstrate continued competence throughout their careers. The Task Force recommends the development of frameworks for growth, supervision and evaluation of school and district leaders, aligned with their respective practice standards (Recommendation 18).

Assuring teaching excellence

The final theme we examined was the assurance of teaching excellence. Full analysis and recommendations are provided in Section 9. An important question for the Task Force was: do our governance and regulatory systems align with and support teaching excellence? We had several concerns.

CONDUCT AND COMPETENCE

Throughout this report, the Task Force asserts that the interest of students must come first. Nowhere has this assertion been more questioned than in issues related to teacher conduct and competence. Public confidence is low, with only half of Albertans in the Task Force survey confident that complaints about teacher conduct are effectively addressed. Fewer Albertans (37.9 per cent) are confident that complaints about teacher competency are effectively addressed. In fact, in the last ten years, there have been no cases in which a teacher's certification has been cancelled due to incompetence.

While issues of conduct and competence are very different, they are currently dealt with in the same manner. The existing system cannot be modified to deal effectively with issues of competence. We need a different system. The Task Force recommends that issues of conduct and competence be dealt with through different processes (Recommendation 19).

On issues of conduct, we believe that changes are needed to assure greater openness, transparency, timeliness, fairness and efficiency (Recommendation 20). If the interest of students truly come first, our system must be more open and understandable to parents and students. Structures for appeals of decisions also need to change.

On issues of competence, the Task Force recommends a very different system than what is currently in place. We recommend the Minister of Education introduce a system of maintenance of certification for teachers to assure career-long growth, currency, and competency (Recommendation 21). Under this system, teachers would be evaluated every five years to determine whether their certification to teach should be maintained. The teacher would receive annual feedback on his or her progress in qualifying for maintenance of certification. He or she would prepare a dossier of evidence of effective teaching, aligned with provincial practice standards, to support a recommendation.

THE SCHOOL LEADER

The Task Force makes two recommendations with respect to school leaders that parallel those for teachers. Simply stated, we believe there needs to be an accountability and feedback structure for school leaders similar to that proposed for teachers.

The Task Force recommends the introduction of a maintenance of designation for school leaders (Recommendation 22). School leaders would be evaluated every five years to maintain their administrative designation. Further, the Task Force believes that school leaders need annual feedback to assure leadership excellence (Recommendation 23).

EMPOWERING THE SCHOOL LEADER

The vast majority of school leaders, including principals, are members of the Alberta Teachers' Association – that is, they are in-scope (unionized). The Task Force discussed, at some length, whether principals can fully enable teaching excellence while maintaining membership in the Alberta Teachers' Association. Our greatest concern is centered on the question of whether principals, as members of the same professional association as teachers, can be sufficiently empowered to implement and support the recommendations of this report, particularly in assuming an expanded human resource function related to assuring teaching excellence. The Task Force recommends principals be empowered to support the recommendations of this report (Recommendation 24). If empowerment is not possible under the current structure, the Task Force recommends the Minister of Education consider removing principals from the Alberta Teachers' Association.

THE REGULATORY MODEL

Regulatory models for education differ across jurisdictions. For the Task Force, the central issue is where professional functions[14] should reside. These functions can reside with a teachers' association or union, with the Ministry of Education, or with an independent professional college. In Alberta, professional functions are shared between the Alberta Teachers' Association and the Ministry of Education (the Ministry would assume more professional functions as a result of the adoption of recommendations of this report). The Task Force recommends Alberta retain a model of shared professional responsibility, with the regulatory model modified to implement the recommendations of this report (Recommendation 25). If changes cannot be made within the existing model, the Task Force recommends the Minister of Education consider either a Ministry-based model or a separate professional college for teachers.

14 Functions that serve the public interest, including the maintenance and enforcement of standards.

6 PRACTICE STANDARDS: ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Practice standards are the foundation of all professions. Generally, they outline what is expected of members of the profession. In the case of teachers, the *Teaching Quality Standard* describes what effective teachers achieve. For example, an effective teacher is able to draw upon his or her attributes, skills and knowledge to design and customize lesson plans that meet the differing needs of students.

The *Teaching Quality Standard* guides the daily practice of the teacher and the development of teacher education programs. As such, the *Teaching Quality Standard* must align with the vision of *Inspiring Education*.

Most participants in the Task Force survey (80 per cent) said there should be a common practice standard for teachers, with most teachers (69.5 per cent) in agreement. As well, many participants in regulatory review consultations for the new *Education Act* believe the current *Teaching Quality Standard* provides a solid template from which modifications could be made to accommodate *Inspiring Education*'s objectives.[15]

In its submission to the Task Force, the Alberta School Boards Association commented on the need to update the *Teaching Quality Standard*:

> The present *Teaching Quality Standard* is dated and does not necessarily reflect the current needs of our students. The standard should identify the expectations of teachers at the various stages of their career (i.e., interim certification or permanent certification), and in a manner that is consistent with the expectations of parents and students that high quality instruction is provided. The standard must be revised to reflect the role of the teacher in achieving the vision of *Inspiring Education*. School boards, teachers, students, parent organizations,

15 Government of Alberta, *Education Act: Regulatory Review Consultation* (February 2014 draft), p.134.

system administrators, Alberta Education, and post-secondary teacher preparation institutions need to come together to define a new standard.[16]

Next to the quality of teaching, leadership is the most important factor in ensuring high-quality learning experiences for students. However, provincial legislation does not specify the competencies required of educational leaders in Alberta; it only requires that a principal be a certificated teacher. Most survey participants (75 per cent) believe there should be common practice standards for school principals and superintendents respectively.

A competency is an interrelated set of attitudes, skills and knowledge that is drawn upon and applied to a particular context for successful learning and living.

– Alberta Education

Draft practice standards included in *The Professional Practice Competencies for School Leaders in Alberta* (2011) are widely used as a foundation for the practice of school leaders. The practice standards strive to ensure all schools in Alberta are led by suitable, qualified and effective school leaders who are committed to quality education for all students and to fulfilling the vision of *Inspiring Education*. The practice standards are one of three elements in the *Alberta School Leadership Framework* that was developed in 2011 in collaboration with Alberta's education stakeholder organizations. The three elements are:

- draft *Professional Practice Competencies for School Leaders in Alberta*
- quality indicators for school leader development programs
- stakeholder roles and responsibilities for the implementation of the framework

At this point, no provincial practice standards exist for district leaders. However, the College of Alberta School Superintendents has developed proposed practice standards for its members. The *Practice Standard, Leadership Dimensions and Descriptors* include 12 leadership dimensions – with supporting descriptors – that reflect the Alberta context. The practice standards acknowledge that, due to differences in roles and job responsibilities, the means to demonstrate the dimensions (or competencies) will vary by district.

To ensure every level of the education system is embracing the vision of *Inspiring Education*, the Task Force believes there must be absolute clarity of educator expectations. Practice standards are where this clarity is provided. Practice standards must reflect the shifts desired for the whole system of education: a focus on education and the learner (versus the school and the system); the building of competencies (versus the teaching of content); and the use of technology to support the creation of knowledge (versus the sharing of knowledge).

Competencies of an effective teacher

The Alberta Association of Deans of Education has identified five key competencies of an effective teacher. An effective teacher:

1. designs academically and intellectually engaging learning
2. engages students in meaningful learning experiences
3. assesses student learning to guide teaching and improve learning
4. fosters supportive learning relationships
5. collaborates to enhance teaching and learning

16 Task Force for Teaching Excellence, *What We Heard: Community and Stakeholder Consultation* (2014). Appendix E: Alberta School Boards Association's Submission to the Task Force

Given the importance of practice standards, there must be an established process for reviewing and updating these standards. This need is reinforced by rapid change in the world around us, and the impact this change has on teaching, leadership and the education system.

The Task Force makes the following recommendations:

RECOMMENDATION 1: Teaching practice standards

That the *Teaching Quality Standard* be revised to align with *Inspiring Education* and with the recommendations of this report. The Task Force further recommends that the *Teaching Quality Standard* be framed by the ability to achieve and maintain teaching excellence.

Further advice: The Task Force found the five teacher competencies (see sidebar) of the Alberta Association of Deans of Education's *Framework of Effective Teaching for Learning*[17] to be compelling and an appropriate starting point for defining competencies for teacher excellence competencies within the *Teaching Quality Standard*.

RECOMMENDATION 2: School leader practice standards

That the Ministry of Education adopt practice standards for school leaders.

Further advice: The current draft standard, the *Professional Practice Competencies for School Leaders in Alberta*, be reviewed and revised to align with *Inspiring Education* and be consistent with this report. Given the advanced state of the draft standard's development, the Task Force believes there is an opportunity for expedited revisions and adoption.

RECOMMENDATION 3: District leader practice standards

That the Ministry of Education adopt practice standards for district leaders.

Further advice: The standards need to align with *Inspiring Education* and be consistent with this report. The College of Alberta School Superintendents' *Practice Standard, Leadership Dimension and Descriptors* is an appropriate starting point for defining competencies for district leaders.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Review of practice standards

That the practice standards for teachers, school leaders and district leaders be reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

Further advice: Reviews should be conducted every five years or earlier when there is substantive system change. For transparency, consistency and alignment with *Inspiring Education*, there should be a naming convention across these standards.

17 Alberta Association of Deans of Education, *A Framework for Effective Teaching for Learning* (2012), pp. 15 -17.

7 ENABLING TEACHING EXCELLENCE: ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A main theme of *Inspiring Education* was that, as the world and classrooms change, so too must the role of the teacher. Albertans said teachers must be flexible, innovative and learner-centered, if students are to acquire the skills and knowledge they need to be engaged, ethical and entrepreneurial.

In considering how to enable teaching excellence, the Task Force considered these issues:

- How do we attract, prepare and induct new teachers?
- How do we develop and retain experienced teachers?
- How do be we best support teachers?

Attracting, preparing and inducting new teachers

How we attract

An important step in achieving the vision of *Inspiring Education* occurs at the decision point of whom enters the profession of teaching. Ideally, we want a community of teachers with a mix of experience, subject expertise and passion. We want a community of teachers that reflects the diverse communities they serve, with a range of backgrounds and experiences, so they can connect deeply with students. We want a community of teachers with a range of backgrounds and experiences that reflects the diverse communities they serve.

How do we attract and select candidates to the profession today? Alberta's two largest universities – the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary – use high school or post-secondary marks to determine who enters teacher preparation programs. The University of Lethbridge admits students based on marks, submission of a portfolio,

and completion of an introductory teaching course. The six other institutions use marks as well, but they also consider teaching-related work and volunteer experience, interviews, personal essays, and references. (Further requirements are listed in Appendix D.)

In our consultations, a common concern was that a reliance on high school or post-secondary marks does not provide sufficient insight into a candidate's ability to excel in the classroom. Many participants felt that admitting candidates solely on the basis of grades might exclude some truly worthy applicants. For many, great teachers show a passion for teaching before they begin their education to be a teacher. This demonstration could take the form of teaching-related experience, of experience working with children/youth in a range of capacities as a volunteer or in previous employment, or of a focused interview with candidates.

The belief that factors other than grades contribute to teaching excellence was reinforced by the Task Force survey. When asked what traits an individual considering teaching should have, the top answers were patience (36.1 per cent), compassion and empathy (28.9 per cent), intelligence and knowledge (17.5 per cent) and a love of children (15.6 per cent).

RECOMMENDATION 5: Admission to teacher preparation programs

That Alberta's teacher preparation programs be encouraged to look beyond grades, when making admission decisions, to consider other relevant criteria in the spirit of *Inspiring Education*.

Further advice: This may include evidence of the applicant's insight into the profession, ability to make a connection and work with the student, and diversity of experience and background that would enhance the teaching profession.

How we prepare

One of the central elements of *Inspiring Education* relates to the role of the teacher, shifting from that of "sage" to that of "architect of learning". *Inspiring Education* envisions teachers helping students to develop core competencies, including the ability to think critically, to manage information, and to explore new opportunities. Students will be supported as individuals, with full consideration of their unique interests, experiences, and abilities. Teachers will work in partnership with the community and will work more closely with one another.

While participants in the Task Force consultations believed teacher preparation is important, some questioned whether Alberta's teacher preparation programs are adequately equipping their students for the changing classroom. For some participants, there was a desire to see longer practicums and more focus on pedagogy and neuroscience. This desire was

reiterated by participants in the *Inspiring Education* Symposium. When asked what change they would make to ensure teaching excellence in every classroom, one of the top responses was "improved and applicable teacher preparation"[18]

Consultation participants also discussed how much Alberta teacher preparation programs should vary. In its submission to the Task Force, the College of School Superintendents offered this advice:

> Currently there are considerable differences between the teacher education and pre-service programs that are in place in the province. The College suggests that consideration be given to a provincial approach/model for teacher education. The review of teacher education programs must involve stakeholders, especially system education leaders. Graduating teachers must learn and possess the competencies envisioned by *Inspiring Education* upon completion of a teacher education program.[19]

The Task Force noted that there are nine teacher preparation programs in Alberta. Each offers a different method for earning a teaching degree (see sidebar).This can be positive in that it allows students to choose a program that best meets their needs. But, at the same time, it can be challenging to advance new or best practices across every institution. While recognizing the autonomy of post-secondary institutions, the Task Force believes all teacher preparation programs should incorporate content that prepares their students for the shifts envisioned in *Inspiring Education*.

Earning a teaching degree

Alberta's largest universities offer a variety of methods to earn a teaching degree, with options to study for four years directly after high school, for two years after another degree, or for four or five years concurrent or consecutive with another specialization. The university colleges offer two-year, after-degree programs (the offerings of all teacher preparation programs are summarized in Appendix E).

RECOMMENDATION 6: Alignment of teacher preparation programs with *Inspiring Education*

That the Ministry of Education facilitate an annual discussion among Alberta's teacher preparation institutions on alignment of their programs with *Inspiring Education*, including its vision, values, principles and policy shifts.

Further advice: The Task Force recognizes that teacher education programs in Alberta are in the process of achieving this goal. It is, however, important that the Ministry of Education be aware of the challenges being faced as well as the differences and similarities in how programs are achieving this goal. The Task Force further believes that this recommendation can expedite a sharing of, and collaboration on, emerging best practice related to *Inspiring Education* among teacher preparation programs.

18 Task Force for Teaching Excellence, *What We Heard: Community and Stakeholder Consultation* (2014). p.126

19 Task Force for Teaching Excellence, *What We Heard: Community and Stakeholder Consultation* (2014). Appendix E: College of Alberta School Superintendents' Submission to the Task Force. p.190

Expanding pathways to certification

Inspiring Education describes an education system centered on the learner with more participation from the community. It describes a system where a teacher might invite an expert in to instruct a class. The expert might even instruct a class without direct teacher supervision but under the guidance of the principal.

Currently, teachers in Alberta must have a minimum of 16 years of education, including a minimum of four years of post-secondary education. They must have a recognized degree, usually a Bachelor of Education, from a recognized teacher preparation program. Teachers must also declare commitment to the attributes, skills and knowledge included in the *Teaching Quality Standard* and provide evidence of being fit to teach, eligibility to work in Canada, and proficiency in the English or French language. After two years of successful teaching, a teacher is eligible for a permanent certificate. Teachers who meet certification standards are authorized to teach by the Minister of Education.

In addition to these qualifications, most school teachers in Alberta must be members of the Alberta Teachers' Association; the exception is for those who teach in private, charter or band-operated schools.

Issues arise when schools can't recruit certified teachers to instruct specialized subjects such as welding, technology, or Cree. While often an issue in rural or remote communities, this issue is not limited to those areas. In such cases, the school authority may ask the Minister of Education to issue a Letter of Authority which allows a person who has not met certification requirements at that time to teach. The Letter of Authority is issued for one year and may be renewed if the individual upgrades his or her qualifications for certification and receives a recommendation from the school board.

Over half of participants in the Task Force survey said that people with certification in a trade (56.4 per cent) or with sufficient expertise in a discipline associated with the subject of instruction (53.9 per cent) should be allowed to teach. School leaders and teachers are less likely to believe that those with certification in a trade (43.1 per cent of school leaders and 35.8 per cent of teachers) or those with expertise in a discipline (32.6 per cent of school leaders and 29.5 per cent of teachers) should be authorized to teach in Alberta schools.

Some consultation participants noted that teaching is about more than knowledge. An understanding of learning theory, pedagogy and student assessment is also critical. At the same time, it was argued that without the assistance of outside experts, some students may not have access to a full range of learning opportunities. The Task Force agrees it is important to define a single standard for certification, but the Task Force also believes this standard may be achieved in different ways.

RECOMMENDATION 7: Alternative pathways to teaching and Letters of Authority:

To bring people with a diversity of skills, expertise and background into Alberta classrooms:

7.1 That alternative pathways to teaching certification be developed for those in specialized areas of instruction including the trades, fine arts, and other professions.

Further advice: In recommending the establishment of alternative pathways, the Task Force wants to affirm that there is a single standard for certification (i.e., the *Teaching Quality Standard*). The nature and duration of teacher preparation, including the practicum and other relevant experiences, and how competence is demonstrated, will vary with each pathway.

7.2 That the use of Letters of Authority be revised to increase their effectiveness and to facilitate the employment of non-certificated instructors in an area of specialization. The Task Force further recommends that Letters of Authority be in force for a period appropriate to the circumstance, and the nature of practice supervision of those teaching under a Letter of Authority be at the discretion of the principal who would be responsible for ensuring an appropriate level of supervision.

Teacher practicums

A practicum is the time a student teacher (pre-service teacher) spends in the classroom getting "real world" teaching experience. During the practicum, the student teacher gains an understanding of the skills and knowledge required to be a teacher. Further, practicums can help students determine if teaching is the right profession for them.

Many teacher preparation programs include a practicum at some point in each program year. Alberta's university-based programs offer between two and four practicums, each from five to 15 weeks in length. The college-based programs offer a wider variety of arrangements, including 10 half-day field experiences and participation in non-instructional activities (e.g., days spent planning classroom activities).

In Task Force consultations, we heard that teacher preparation programs should include longer practicums, provided earlier in the program. This was a common message from school leaders. The Task Force also heard that it is often difficult to secure placements – that "taking a practicum student is still seen by too many schools as a burden, not as a sign of excellence." The education of teachers is fundamental to the future of the profession, and any impediments to student placements need to be understood and rectified. The Task Force understands that revision to practicum arrangements will require significant discussion with education faculties, the profession, schools and school boards.

Practicums prepare student teachers for life in the classroom and enhance their learning. Further, as noted, practicums are a good way of determining whether teaching is the right choice for those admitted to teacher preparation programs. As such, we support the suggestion that practicums should be longer in length and earlier in teacher preparation programs. To get the most out of the experience, practicums also must be of high quality.

RECOMMENDATION 8: Practicums

That practicums in Alberta's teacher preparation programs:

8.1 Provide exposure to the field of teaching in the first year, or prior to entering a program, such that participants can discern their suitability for a career in teaching, and provide context for their theory-based studies.

8.2 Provide high-quality opportunities throughout (where possible in each year of the program) with an extension beyond the current minimum of 10 weeks, leading to greater professional independence and awareness.

Further advice: A more formalized process of shared and collective responsibility (of leaders of teacher preparation programs, school authorities, school leaders and teachers) be adopted to ensure there are an appropriate number of practicum placements in the system, and that those supervising pre-service teachers are consistently demonstrating effective teaching practices in accordance with the *Teaching Quality Standard*.

How we induct

For many beginning teachers, the transition from a teacher preparation program to a full-time teaching position can be challenging. Participants in Task Force consultations suggested that beginning teachers are often "thrown to the wolves." Beginning teachers are given the most challenging assignments or a workload that more senior teachers don't want. It should be no surprise, therefore, that about 25 per cent of teachers leave the profession in the first five years of teaching.

What is the difference between an internship and a practicum?

A teaching internship would offer an extended period of supervised practice following completion of a teaching degree and prior to interim certification. It would not be part of the undergraduate program. A practicum is part of the undergraduate program and offers shorter periods of field experience at varying times during the course of study.

A central question for the Task Force was: how do we accelerate the development of teaching skills in a beginning teacher? How do we ensure the teacher is getting a good start and is well on the way to achieving teaching excellence? While many Alberta jurisdictions have created teacher induction programs, there is a lack of consistency in program access, content and quality. For the Task Force, the answer lies in internships and mentorship.

Internships/articling programs are a hallmark of most professions. Generally they include both a work component and a further development of competencies, all in the work setting. A person who is interning or articling typically receives a reduced salary for a reduced workload.

Participants in the consultations expressed a desire for increased practical education of teachers. The Alberta Teachers' Association, in its submission to the Task Force, stated the following with regard to teacher preparation and induction:

> At the present time, there is no transition from completion of a teacher preparation program to teaching practice. Just prior to the onset of the global financial crisis, the ministry, under Honourable Hancock, was poised to introduce a provincial induction/orientation program that would have reduced a first-year teacher's load and would have provided time for mentor teachers, with a combined reduction of approximately .25 FTE teaching. This would be a constructive investment with long-term implications for the development of excellent teachers and would help to retain teachers in the profession, especially in the first three to five years of teaching. There are also implications for teacher preparation programs over time, including instructional strategies and personalizing learning.[20]

Currently, internships for teachers are not required in Alberta. However, the Task Force believes a mandatory internship would give beginning teachers an opportunity to hone their skills and become more reflective, independent, innovative and confident. Those interning would have their own classrooms, under the supervision of an experienced teacher, without the responsibility of a full-time teaching load. This would accelerate the development of their teaching skills, better prepare them to assume a full-time teaching position, and propel them to achieve teaching excellence.

RECOMMENDATION 9: Internships/articling

That the Ministry consider the introduction of a mandatory one-year paid internship/articling program for all beginning teachers on completion of a teacher preparation program, with a focus on accelerating the development of the competencies included in the *Teaching Quality Standard* and associated with excellence in teaching.

Further Advice: That the duration of probationary contracts of employment and the period for qualification for permanent certification be aligned to accommodate this program.

20 Task Force for Teaching Excellence, *What We Heard: Community and Stakeholder Consultation* (2014), Appendix E: The Alberta Teachers' Association's Submission to the Task Force. p.152

Mentoring

As suggested, a first-year teacher should not be expected to walk into a classroom and perform at the same level as a teacher with 10 years of experience. The experience in the first years will greatly impact a teacher's success and longevity in the profession.

In our consultations, there were calls for more support for beginning teachers, including focused mentorship. Similarly, survey participants mentioned mentoring as important to the professional development of teachers.

Mentorship programs currently exist in an ad hoc fashion throughout the province. The Alberta Teachers' Association provides a model for mentoring. As well, the Ministry of Education is conducting a pilot study *Supporting Beginning Teachers* in northern Alberta school jurisdictions as well as investigating other local, national and international teacher induction programs. The pilot study focuses on identifying and describing promising practices for teacher induction, including mentorship.

The Task Force recommends the establishment of a formal provincewide mentorship program for teachers. We believe experienced teachers have a professional obligation to mentor new teachers, and provide observations and feedback, as well as support. To do so, there must be formal processes for selecting mentors, training mentors, and facilitating opportunities for meaningful interaction. Ultimately, a well-designed mentorship program will allow both new and experienced teachers to learn from one another and better prepare new teachers for future success.

RECOMMENDATION 10: Mentorship

That a provincewide mentorship framework be introduced to support teachers in the first three-to-five years of their career. While the program structure should be consistent across the province, it also needs to accommodate local contexts.

Further advice: The Task Force recognizes the importance of mentorship not just at the start of one's career, but throughout. This is particularly important for individuals going through periods of career transition, including those moving between districts and to Alberta from other jurisdictions. The Ministry is encouraged to work with educational stakeholders to determine how to best meet these needs.

Developing and retaining excellent teachers

The preparation and induction of new teachers provides a foundation for teaching excellence. But equally important is how teachers advance in their careers.

Professional growth

Participants in Task Force consultations acknowledged the critical relationship between professional growth and teaching excellence. There was a strong perception that current

professional development is often of a very poor quality, with no accountability for true practice improvement or career-long learning. Many said that professional growth and development must be better managed.

Participants in the *Inspiring Education* Symposium were asked what one thing they would change to achieve teaching excellence in every classroom in the province. One of the top five answers was more professional development.

The primary vehicle for professional development of teachers in Alberta is the annual professional growth plan which is defined in the *Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy*. Every teacher prepares his or her own growth plan. The plan considers the personal learning needs of the teacher, the *Teaching Quality Standard*, and school, district and government goals for education. Principals determine how to best assist teachers in achieving their plans, including allocating time for discussion, dedicating resources for activities, and providing relief time from teaching duties.

The Ministry of Education and the Alberta Teachers' Association develop professional learning resources and fund professional development activities including the annual teachers' conventions. Schools and school divisions also arrange professional development days and activities.

In its discussions, the Task Force noted that professional learning for teachers often consists of short-term, unfocused activities including workshops or conventions. As a result, there are many teachers who are not engaged in high-quality, long-term professional learning.

The Task Force believes professional development must build the individual and collective expertise of teachers. The Task Force believes professional learning practices need to be strengthened in line with those proposed by Peter Cole of the Centre for Strategic Education in Australia:[21]

- Professional learning should be a routine practice within the school, involving all teachers.
- Professional learning should be collaborative with teachers contributing to one another's learning. Teachers with common needs can support one another, and share best practices.
- Professional learning should aim to improve the performance of the whole school, as well as the individual.
- Professional learning should focus on the implementation of teaching strategies and techniques that make the biggest difference to student learning.

A research study commissioned by the Alberta Teachers' Association found that most teachers (80 per cent) say their best professional learning occurs in collaboration with colleagues.

Teachers reported a need (89.3 per cent) to focus professional learning on becoming better teachers (develop classroom resources, support for their subjects, classroom management, technology skills, and instructional strategies to better meet the needs of diverse students).[22]

21 Cole, P. (2012). *Aligning Professional Learning, Performance Management and Effective Teaching*, Centre for Strategic Education, Seminar Series (217), 1-30.

22 Beauchamp, Klassen and Parsons, *Exploring the Development of Teacher Efficacy Through Professional Learning Experiences* (January 2014).

While opinion is divided on how to best manage professional development, almost all participants in consultations agreed that more time and money must be found for the professional development of teachers and school leaders. Some believe this time can be embedded into the school year. Some suggested extending the school year, without adding teaching responsibility, to accommodate the need for professional development. Many suggested better use of technology to support professional development. Many supported the idea of sharing existing best practices throughout the province, as well as looking outside the province for the best ideas.

All believe that the professional development should support and nurture lifelong learning for all teachers. There was a strong belief that introducing accountability into the model is essential and that teacher growth plans should receive meaningful feedback from principals and be used for performance assessment purposes.

The challenge for the education system is to provide the best opportunities for professional growth and development, and to ensure those opportunities are relevant and integrated into the classroom. The Task Force believes professional growth is not just the responsibility of the individual teacher, but the responsibility of teachers collectively, and the employer. It also believes that professional growth must be regularly assessed to ensure the teacher is current and effective. Professional development should not be "one-off" events (e.g., workshops or conventions), but must be embedded in the ongoing work of the teacher and in his or her interactions with colleagues.

RECOMMENDATION 11: Teacher's annual professional learning plan

That the *Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy* be revised such that:

The teacher's annual professional learning and growth plan (currently referred to as the *Professional Growth Plan*):

- is jointly developed with the principal or designate
- is aligned with the goals of the school, the district, and the community
- demonstrates professional growth, currency, and competency, leading to teaching excellence

The plan will include a process through which regular feedback is provided to the teacher on his or her progress in achieving the plan goals and a year-end written evaluation of the teacher's plan by the principal or designate.

Other Advice: Feedback from students, parents, and peers be used to identify and inform the teacher's goals.

Recognizing teaching excellence

Currently, there are no formal ways of recognizing teaching excellence in Alberta other than the Excellence in Teaching Awards. Salaries are tied to years of teacher education and of service, not to excellence. Opportunities for sharing teaching expertise are limited. There are limited career pathways for teachers to expand their role, other than to leave the classroom.

In our consultations, three primary reasons were presented for the introduction of new teacher designations. The first is that the best teachers in the system could take on greater roles, such as mentorship, without becoming school leaders. The second and third reasons relate to incentives and recognition.

Three-quarters of Albertans (74.5 per cent) responding to the Task Force survey believe that teachers who have demonstrated excellence in their practice should receive special designation. Smaller majorities of school leaders (54 per cent) and teachers (55 per cent) support this opinion.

Internationally, a number of jurisdictions have designations that recognize the professional growth of teachers. For example, Australia recognizes four career stages that reflect increasing levels of professional knowledge, practice and engagement, as do England and Wales (see Appendix E).

The Task Force believes that by recognizing excellent teaching practice, teachers will be encouraged to achieve excellence and to share their expertise with others.

RECOMMENDATION 12: Recognizing and motivating teachers

That the Ministry of Education create and administer a new provincial designation to recognize teachers who consistently demonstrate teaching excellence and mastery in accordance with the *Teaching Quality Standard*. These individuals would be invited to contribute their expertise in areas such as:

- mentorship of other teachers
- leadership in teacher collaboration
- support of student teachers during their practicum and/or articling/internship
- citizenship roles which advance the interests of students

We further recommend that those receiving this designation be allotted time from their teaching duties, additional resources, and/or an honorarium from the Ministry, commensurate with their participation in such areas. A teacher's designation would continue at the pleasure of the Ministry.

Further advice: It is our expectation that all teachers, not just those holding this designation, would contribute their expertise in these areas where appropriate.

Supporting our teachers

In consultations, participants said that our system of support for teachers and the learning environment must change. Participants said that in order for students to excel, supports must respond to the following developments:

- more diverse and inclusive classrooms
- increased use of technology
- the vision of *Inspiring Education*

The Task Force heard that professional learning must evolve and become stronger and more relevant. But, more than anything else, it heard that teachers need time – time for planning, collaborating, sharing best practice, and empowering innovation.

Teachers frequently noted difficulties in accessing qualified educational assistants and external experts, including speech language pathologists. Many of the concerns expressed reflected those previously highlighted in the 2009 Alberta Education report *Setting the Direction*. A central theme of that report, and in our consultations with Albertans, was that as Alberta's student population becomes more diverse the range of student learning needs will increase. The stated goal of *Setting the Direction* was that the "education system is equipped, resourced and ready to support and respond to the needs of all students in an inclusive way." An important recommendation was that Alberta "implement a provincewide expectation that school-based expertise will be in place to support teachers in meeting the needs of students with disabilities and diverse needs within learning environments."[23] It is clear that this has not yet been achieved.

In consultation sessions, the availability and support for technology were often raised as issues. Participants said we need to increase access to technologies to support the learning of students. Equally important, this technology must be appropriately supported by experts in a timely manner. Outdated or non-functioning technology not only impedes but often interrupts student learning. It is clear that if the five policy directions identified in the Ministry of Education's 2013 *Learning and Technology Policy Framework* are to be achieved, the availability and support for technology will need to be addressed.

There was a prevalent belief that there needs to be stronger support for the professional learning of teachers and educational leaders. While participants strongly acknowledged the importance of professional learning, concern was expressed about its relevance, quality and structure. As summarized in the *Part II: What We Heard Report*, participants in our consultations agreed that the path to excellence is in better managed professional growth and development. It is a rare teacher who believes there is nothing more to learn. The challenge for the system revolves around delivering the best possible opportunities for professional growth and development and ensuring new practices are both relevant and integrated into the classroom.

23 Alberta Education, *Setting the Direction* (2009), p.9.

The issue of class size was raised in several consultation sessions. Some participants said class sizes are too big; this concern was most evident in urban centres. Others expressed concern about the added facility and staffing costs of smaller class sizes. While levels of education funding play an important role in creating the conditions for improving student outcomes, Andreas Schleicher, head of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), says that what is important is *how* countries spend their money. It is important to note that Canada spends among the highest amount in the world on Kindergarten to Grade 12 education, with Alberta spending the most per capita of all Canadian provinces. Some of the school systems that perform best internationally have relatively large class sizes and put most of their reform efforts and resources into recruiting, training and advancing the very best teachers:

> Parents judge schools on things they can easily observe – the size of the class, number of hours, all of these kinds of things. But if you look at actually what makes a difference, it's quality of teaching. And quality of the education system can never exceed the quality of instruction. If you look at high-performing nations, it's actually a very interesting experience. They tend to prioritise the quality of teachers over the size of the classes.[24]

While the Task Force acknowledges that class size is a factor in teaching excellence, particularly in the early grades, there are inherent financial tradeoffs. At times a class of 30 or more will be appropriate, given the makeup of the class, the focus of the lesson, and the type of instruction. At other times, however, ten students may be too many; such as when individual students require one-on-one support for a learning activity. Individual class size must reflect the learning needs and the strengths of the students. We would further note that in focusing on supports for teachers, issues such as time for collaboration and professional learning are as important, and perhaps more important, than reducing class size. The Alberta Teachers' Association, in its submission to the Task Force, paid particular attention to the need for "wrap around" services to support students with special learning needs.

> Even before teachers express concern about their growing class sizes, teachers express enormous frustration with the inability of government to provide meaningful "wrap around services" to meet each student's learning needs. While teachers generally support inclusion of special needs students, reduced levels of support for front-line teachers make this situation very difficult. Even when supports exist for part of a day, the student's special needs exist all day.[25]

24 New Zealand Listener: http://www.listener.co.nz/current-affairs/education/our-place-in-the-education-world-a-qa-with-andreas-schleicher/

25 Task Force for Teaching Excellence, *What We Heard: Community and Stakeholder Consultation* (2014), Appendix E: The Alberta Teachers' Association's Submission to the Task Force. p.153

The Task Force makes the following recommendations:

RECOMMENDATION 13: Teaching support

That the Ministry of Education improve our system of teaching support, including the availability of technology and related support, access to and adequacy of specialized supports and services for students (particularly during the early grades) and increased efficiency of processes to access supports.

RECOMMENDATION 14: Supports in the learning environment

That teachers be provided appropriate time for planning, collaborating, sharing best practices, and empowering innovation. The Task Force further recommends that the Ministry of Education create a framework for teacher professional learning (professional development) aligned with *Inspiring Education* and the research on effective programming, and work collaboratively with the Alberta Teachers' Association to strengthen the delivery and effectiveness of professional learning.

8 LEADERSHIP'S ROLE IN ENABLING TEACHING EXCELLENCE: ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

> The quality of teaching is directly affected by the quality of leadership with which it occurs.[26] After teaching, leadership has the second biggest effect on raising achievement.[27]

In considering the role of leaders in enabling teaching excellence, the Task Force examined several issues, including:

- How do we attract, prepare and induct school leaders?
- How do we develop and retain school leaders?

As previously noted, the teacher is not solely responsible for achieving teaching excellence. The entire system must create a culture that nurtures, supports and sustains teaching excellence. School and district leaders play a significant role.

According to Andreas Schleicher, Special Advisor on Education Policy and Deputy Director for Education to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development:

> The past emphasized school management; now it is about leadership, with a focus on supporting, evaluating and developing teacher quality as its core, which includes coordinating the curriculum and teaching program, monitoring and evaluating teacher practice, promoting teacher professional development and supporting collaborative work cultures.[28]

26 *A 21st Century Body for the Education Profession* (New Zealand Government, 2013), p.5 (http://www.minedu.govt.nz/~/media/MinEdu/Files/TheMinistry/NZTCReviewProposals2013/NZTC_ReviewProposalsDiscussionPaper.pdf)

27 Ibid., p.7

28 Andreas Schleicher, *"The Five Things I've Learned"* (Pearson Foundation, 2012) (http://www.thefivethings.org/andreas-schleicher/)

To do so, we must make appropriate selections in determining who leads and ensuring they are developed and empowered to perform all the functions of leadership. As stated in our consultations by a recent high school graduate:

> As a student who just left the K-12 system, I know how essential it is to have excellent principals. Principals literally "make or break" a school.

Like the role of the teacher, the role of school leaders is complex, particularly that of the principal. The principal is the pedagogical leader in the school. Principals are responsible for ensuring all teachers provide quality instruction and all students have the opportunity to reach their full potential. They are responsible for managing the daily activities of the school and maintaining order and discipline. They promote cooperation between the school and the community they serve.

Albertans surveyed most often mentioned leadership (20.3 per cent) when identifying the traits a principal should have. Other common mentions were compassion and empathy (9.1 per cent), and good communication skills (7.6 per cent).

The expectations we have of principals are high. Consultation participants said principals should encourage professional development for and acknowledge and reward teachers. They should provide teachers with mentoring and support but also supervise and evaluate teacher practice, and serve as positive role models in their commitment, attitudes, relationships and daily practice.

Attracting, preparing and inducting school leaders

Who we attract

Acknowledging the critical role of school leaders, some consultation participants suggested the process for selecting school leaders needs to be reconsidered. For example, to become a principal in Alberta, only a valid teaching certificate is required. While many principals have formal leadership preparation prior to assuming the role, many do not. As well, how teachers are chosen to become school leaders varies across the province. Some districts have well-defined processes in place for identifying, motivating and developing potential school leaders. In others, particularly in hard-to-staff locales, school leaders may be chosen primarily on the basis of self-identification and years of teaching experience with minimum leadership qualifications.

In its deliberations, the Task Force considered the vision of the *Alberta School Leadership Framework* as a means of identifying who we want to be our school leaders. The *Framework*'s vision is that all Alberta schools be served by leaders who create learning cultures that accommodate each student's learning and developmental needs.

The Task Force makes the following recommendation to ensure Alberta school authorities identify and select the best people to provide leadership in our schools:

RECOMMENDATION 15: Selection process for school leaders

That the Ministry collaborate with school authorities and education stakeholders to develop a provincewide framework for the selection process of school leaders, reflecting best practice and aligning with the competencies defined in the practice standards for school leaders.

Further advice: While the framework would provide valuable guidance in the selection process for school leaders, it is important that the selection process adopted by school authorities meets the unique needs of their respective communities.

How we prepare

An overwhelming majority of participants in the Task Force survey (88 per cent) said principals should be required to complete a preparation program *before* assuming leadership duties (84.2 per cent of school leaders and 87.1 per cent of teachers agree).

As previously noted, a teacher can become a principal in Alberta without any leadership preparation; however, most principals have some formal leadership preparation and experience. According to the *Alberta Leadership School Framework Study* (2011), 69 per cent of principals declared that they have participated in a school leadership preparation program, while 31 per cent say they have not. Further, in some school districts, principals must attain post-graduate degrees or diplomas in education administration or leadership to maintain their designation. For a summary of the principal qualifications required in other provinces, please see Appendix G.

Alberta school leaders have access to a variety of leadership preparation programs offered by Alberta-based universities and offered by universities based in other Canadian provinces and many U.S. states. Additionally, they have access to a variety of school leader preparation programs sponsored by professional associations in Alberta, including the College of Alberta School Superintendents' *Start Right* program and the Alberta Teachers' Association's *Educational Leadership Academy*. School leaders in the larger districts also have opportunities for induction and professional development. According to the findings of the *Alberta Leadership School Framework Study* (2011), principals believe they could have benefited from more preparation related to budgeting, technology, conflict management, long-term planning and administration. They also suggested making structured preparation programs a key component of an Alberta school leadership framework.

The Task Force believes it is impossible to empower leadership in schools without proper preparation and makes the following recommendation:

RECOMMENDATION 16: School leadership preparation

That new school leaders complete a mandatory leadership program with a core curriculum based on the practice standard for school leaders and the responsibilities defined in legislation.

Further advice: The Ministry of Education should set the core curriculum in consultation with key education stakeholders. While it is strongly preferable that the program be completed prior to a person becoming a principal (i.e., aspiring principals), the program should be completed in the first two years of a person becoming a principal.

Mentorship

When asked to identify the most effective means of developing an individual for a career as a principal, the most often mentioned response in our survey was mentorship (10.2 per cent of Albertans; 25.1 per cent of school leaders; and 13.4 per cent of teachers).

There are few formal programs for mentoring school leaders currently available in Alberta. One is the Leader2Leader Project offered by the Alberta Teachers' Association in partnership with Alberta Education. In this pilot project, experienced principals mentor beginning principals using cognitive coaching strategies to promote self reflection and professional decision making. The program includes professional development workshops focused on the draft provincial practice standards, i.e., the *Professional Practice Competencies for School Leaders in Alberta*, as well as face-to-face and online learning that foster provincewide collaboration. Beginning principals enrolled in the program determine their focus for professional growth, based on the provincial practice standards and in consideration of their school contexts. This individual professional growth plan guides the coaching relationships with mentors. The pilot project started in January 2013 and will continue to June 2014.

District leaders can access a comprehensive mentorship program offered by the College of Alberta School Superintendents. Experienced superintendents mentor and support College members new to district leadership positions.

The Task Force considered the above programs and also noted that there is a strong and well supported body of research that supports the positive impact of effective mentorship programs on leadership success. We also noted that, while mentorship does happen informally in various locales across the province, a formal provincial mentorship framework for school and district leaders would ensure all principals and superintendents have the opportunity to learn from more experienced practitioners, and therefore accelerate their development of leadership excellence.

RECOMMENDATION 17: Mentorship program for school leaders and district leaders

That a provincial mentorship framework be introduced for school leaders and district leaders.

Further advice: The Ministry of Education should set the framework in consultation with key education stakeholders.

Developing and retaining school leaders

As part of their role as instructional leaders, principals are required to supervise and evaluate teachers in accordance with the provincial *Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy*. While district leaders are expected to provide ongoing support, supervision and evaluation of principals, there is no provincial policy to guide them. In other words, there are no defined provincial parameters to ensure consistency, fairness, transparency, and growth-oriented practices.

This issue was raised in our consultations with Albertans. Teachers and parents questioned the notion that "once a principal always a principal." They wanted greater clarity as to whom the principal is accountable and the process for removing an incompetent school leader. One teacher stated that a superintendent's visit to a school once a year is not enough to determine the practice excellence of a principal.

The Task Force believes principals should provide evidence of meeting practice standards and their suitability for their principal's designation. A similar policy should be introduced for district leaders.

RECOMMENDATION 18: Growth, supervision and evaluation for school leaders and district leaders

That the Ministry of Education develop a framework for "Growth, Supervision and Evaluation" for school leaders and district leaders aligned with the competencies defined in their respective practice standards and *Inspiring Education*.

Further advice: The Ministry of Education should set these policies in consultation with key education stakeholders.

9 ASSURING TEACHING EXCELLENCE: ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To achieve *Inspiring Education* and teaching excellence, it is not enough to focus on teachers and leaders – the broader system must also support teaching excellence. In considering the role of the system in assuring excellence and dealing with issues of competence and conduct, the Task Force looked at a number of issues. We examined whether the existing regulatory model assures the professional behavior of teachers and educational leaders – that is, whether it adequately addresses issues of conduct. We further examined whether the model assures teachers' and educational leaders' career-long growth, currency, and competence.

We realize that to implement many of the recommendations in this report, school leaders must be empowered to take on a greater role in assuring teaching excellence, particularly in areas of conduct and competence. This would require changes to the regulatory model.

Finally, there is a question as to whether the overall regulatory model can be adjusted to achieve the recommendations of this report, or whether more substantive change is required. Currently the Ministry of Education and the Alberta Teachers' Association have shared responsibility for professional functions. Is this the right model?

The existing system of assuring conduct and competence

Teacher conduct and competence are distinct issues. Conduct refers to the professional behavior of the teacher, while competence refers to the teacher's ability to meet the requirements of the *Teaching Quality Standard*. Yet the Alberta system tends to deal with these issues in a similar way.

RECOMMENDATION 19: Separation of review of conduct and competence

That conduct and competence be dealt with through separate structures, including separate practice review processes. This would apply to both teachers and school leaders.

The assurance of conduct

Process

Whereas anyone can bring forward a complaint regarding the conduct of a teacher or a school leader, an official investigation that calls into question the suitability of a person to hold a teaching certificate requires a written complaint of misconduct that cannot be anonymous. An exception exists in the case in which a teacher or school leader has been charged with an indictable offence (see Appendix H). In such cases, the judicial system will deal with the disposition of the charge. During that time, the teacher or school leader will likely be suspended from duties pending the outcome. The conviction of the teacher or school leader automatically leads to a hearing on the cancellation of his or her teaching certificate and termination of employment.

In the vast majority of cases, a complaint is brought to the attention of the principal or superintendent by a parent or student. The principal or superintendent then initiates an investigation to determine whether there are legitimate grounds for the complaint. If the complainant is not satisfied with the investigation and its outcome, or if the complaint is of a very serious nature, a written complaint of misconduct may be submitted by the complainant or school authorities to the Executive Secretary of the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) for members of the Association (who constitute the vast majority of Alberta's teachers and school leaders) or to the Registrar of Alberta Education (for those employed in charter, private or First Nations band-operated schools). The written complaint can then trigger an official investigation.

Based on the outcome of the investigation, the Executive Secretary or the provincial Registrar takes one of three possible actions: 1) orders a formal hearing of the Professional Practice Review Committee; 2) arranges for an invitation (i.e., an informal dispute resolution process); or 3) dismisses the complaint.

If the investigation determines that the evidence calls into question the suitability of the teacher or the school leader to hold a teaching certificate, the case is referred to a formal hearing of the ATA's Professional Practice Review Committee or its equivalent at Alberta Education. Committee hearings are open to the public unless the complainant or the hearing committee requests privacy. If the Committee determines the accused is guilty of unprofessional conduct, it may choose to issue a reprimand and/or fine or recommend that the Minister suspend or cancel the member's teaching certificate. The ATA's Professional Practice Review Committee may also choose to suspend the member's

ATA membership. Upon conviction, an appeal of the Committee's decision can be made by the teacher or school leader to the ATA's Provincial Executive Council or the Registrar. The ATA's or Alberta Education's Professional Conduct Appeal Committee may quash, vary or uphold the Professional Practice Review Committee's decision or refer the case back to the Professional Practice Review Committee.

If the employing school authority of the teacher or school leader who is convicted of unprofessional conduct decides to terminate or suspend his or her employment contract, and the conviction does not result in the Minister's cancellation of the teacher's or school leader's teaching certificate, the teacher can appeal the school authority's decision to a Board of Reference. A school authority has no choice but to terminate a teacher's or school leader's employment contract if he or she does not have a valid teaching certificate. That decision is not appealable to the Board of Reference.

Every province in Canada has some appeal mechanism for teachers facing termination or suspension of an employment contract. In Alberta the Board of Reference is an appeal process that was established in 1927 to resolve disputes between teachers and school leaders and school boards about termination or suspension of an employment contract. A decision or order issued by a Board of Reference must be filed with the Alberta Court of Queen's Bench; that order has the same force as an order of the Court. The appellant or a school authority that is the subject of a Board of Reference order may further appeal the order to the provincial Court of Appeal.

Concerns with the process

The Task Force noted that public faith in the teacher practice review process is low. About half of Albertans (50.1 per cent) who participated in the Task Force survey said they are confident that complaints about teacher conduct are effectively addressed. On average, there are about 70 complaints of unprofessional conduct brought to the ATA Executive Secretary or the Registrar of Alberta Education each year. Of that number, about one-quarter are referred to a Professional Practice Review Committee.

Concern was raised that the system is not perceived to be open, transparent, timely, or efficient. The belief was that the system of dealing with issues of conduct needs to be revised accordingly.

In addition, concerns were raised about the functioning of the Board of Reference. These concerns were echoed by participants in regulatory review consultations for the new *Education Act*. Only 24 per cent of those surveyed consider the Board of Reference to be necessary or important. Seventeen per cent of respondents thought it should be abolished altogether.[29] The Alberta School Boards Association, in its written submission to the Task Force, said:

29 Government of Alberta, *Education Act: Regulatory Review Consultation* (February 2014 draft), p. 18.

> In Alberta, when a teacher's employment contract is severed, the end result can be a Board of Reference. Because this is seen to be a costly and ineffective process, it is seldom used. In many cases, due to the time and monetary investment required to take a case to a Board of Reference, school boards instead negotiate severance arrangements that often result in removing a teacher from one employment relationship only to find him/her resurface in another.[30]

Concern was also expressed about perceived conflicts of interest in having the Alberta Teachers' Association investigate and adjudicate the practice review process while defending its accused members. Noting there are parallels between Saskatchewan and Alberta in how matters of teacher misconduct are managed, the Task Force looked at the recent report by Dr. Dennis Kendel, *For the Sake of Students*, commissioned by the Government of Saskatchewan. The central thrust of his report is that there are insurmountable conflicts of interest created when professions strive to concurrently serve two masters through a single organization. In other words, organizations like the Alberta Teachers' Association and the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation have both real and perceived conflicts of interest when tasked with both protecting the interests of their members (protecting teachers) and protecting the public from risk of harm from their members.

The Task Force shares many of the same concerns expressed by Dr. Kendel. If students are to come first, we must be wary of perceived and actual conflicts of interest. That is, for all professional activities, the focus must be on the interest of the student.

The Task Force makes the following recommendations to remove perceptions of conflict of interest and to improve transparency, timeliness and effectiveness of the practice review process for issues of conduct:

RECOMMENDATION 20: Assuring proper conduct of teachers and school leaders

That the practice review process for addressing issues of teacher and school leader conduct be significantly revised to assure greater openness, transparency, timeliness, and efficiency.

The Task Force further recommends that the practice review process for all teachers and school leaders be assumed by the Minister of Education.

Further advice: The practice review process for assuring proper conduct should be revised to:

- increase public awareness and understanding of what constitutes appropriate conduct
- increase public awareness of the process for initiating and investigating a complaint

30 Task Force for Teaching Excellence, *What We Heard: Community and Stakeholder Consultations* (2014), Appendix E: Alberta School Boards Association's Submission to the Task Force, p.176

- include a protocol for initiating a complaint that is more accessible and understandable to students and parents
- communicate to the public the results of investigations and disciplinary actions, and provide annual aggregate data of these results

The Task Force further recommends that there be changes in the Board of Reference appeal process for teachers and school leaders, including the removal of the power of reinstatement, and limiting severance payment to 12 months of salary. This would improve the timeliness of settlement, and provide greater certainty and fairness to both school authorities and the teacher.

The assurance of competence – accountability for performance

The Task Force recognizes that most teachers are highly competent, and either have achieved teaching excellence or are on the path to excellence. Even though a relatively small percentage of teachers may be considered incompetent or unprofessional, it remains critical that we address these issues effectively and efficiently. If not, their impact on children can be profound.

In all consultations, there was strong support for a more robust system of accountability for teacher performance. Albertans believe the Ministry of Education should create and enforce clear policies, processes and practice standards related to teacher performance. This is not how our system for assurance of teacher competence currently works.

Evaluation process

The system of accountability for teachers is different than that of most other professional settings in that there are no regular evaluations of teacher performance, a critical strategy for promoting and assuring continuous practice improvement in both the public and private sectors. In fact, in Alberta teacher evaluations are only allowed under certain circumstances:

- on the written request of the teacher
- to gather information related to a specific employment decision
- to assess the growth of the teacher in specific areas of practice
- if the principal has reason to believe the *Teaching Quality Standard* is not being met
- for purposes of issuing a permanent teaching certificate or an offer of a continuing contract of employment

Under the provisions of the provincial *Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy*, if the principal initiates an evaluation, he or she must explicitly communicate the following to the teacher: 1) the reason for and purpose of the evaluation; 2) the process, criteria and standards to be used; 3) the timelines to be applied; and 4) the possible outcomes of the evaluation. This is an extraordinary measure –there are no provisions currently for regular evaluations of teacher performance in Alberta.

Process for addressing competence issues

The current process for dealing with issues of competence largely parallels that of misconduct. An official written complaint initiates the process. This may or may not lead to a formal practice review by the ATA (Alberta Education, through the Registrar, investigates the practice of teachers who teach in private, charter and band-operated schools).

But first a complaint is made to the school superintendent who performs an initial investigation. If the complaint is unfounded, no further action is taken. If the superintendent concludes the teacher is not meeting the *Teaching Quality Standard*, the superintendent submits a report to the Executive Secretary of the ATA.

The Executive Secretary then orders a hearing of the case by the ATA's Professional Practice Review Committee. This committee consists of two classroom teachers, one principal or vice-principal, a central office administrator, and a member of the public. The hearing is open to the public.

After hearing evidence, the committee determines whether the teacher is meeting the *Teaching Quality Standard*. The committee may recommend the cancellation or suspension of the teacher's ATA membership. It may also recommend that the Minister of Education cancel or suspend the member's teaching certificate. Before the committee hands down its decision, the teacher may voluntarily request that his or her certificate be cancelled.

The teacher, the superintendent or the ATA Executive Council may appeal the decision of the Professional Practice Review Committee to the Professional Practice Appeal Committee (also under the auspices of the ATA). The appeal committee may quash, vary or confirm the hearing committee's decision. It may also make its own decision or refer the case back to the hearing committee.

Does the current system protect students from poor teachers?

In the past 10 years there have been **no** cases in which a teacher's authority to teach (i.e., teaching certificate) has been cancelled due to incompetence. Given the province has over 40,000 teachers, the Task Force found this statistic almost inconceivable. We acknowledge that some struggling teachers may leave on their own accord.

Task Force members concluded that the current model does not assure teachers' and school leaders' career-long growth, currency, and competence. Albertans agreed, with only 37.9 per cent of Task Force survey respondents (and 51.8 per cent of teacher respondents) expressing confidence that matters related to teacher competency are effectively addressed.

In the Task Force consultation sessions, many participants who identified themselves as educators expressed concern that schools and districts are limited or prevented from removing poor-performing teachers. Many expressed the view that the Alberta Teachers' Association "gets in the way of the process" by protecting under-performing teachers.

The Alberta School Boards Association, in its submission to the Task Force, suggested a more effective mechanism be established for addressing issues related to teaching practice:

> The present practice review process is ineffective and needs to be reformed. The system is largely unresponsive to marginal or incompetent teaching skills and abilities. In effect, limited to addressing primarily those teachers who violate their code of conduct or do not meet employment standards, the system is not meeting the needs of school boards. The reality is that the current processes unintentionally create a disincentive to dealing with the minority of teachers who are not meeting expectations.[31]

The Alberta School Boards Association further noted that:

> Teaching excellence can be assured only if there is an effective means of evaluating the performance of, and supporting the growth of, teaching professionals. The evaluation process must reinforce and contribute to maintaining competencies, but also serve to inspire and recognize the significant efforts and investments teachers make in educating their students.[32]

The importance of an effective performance evaluation system was reinforced throughout our consultations with Albertans. Two-thirds of those participating in the Task Force online survey (66.4 per cent) and nearly half of teacher respondents (45.1 per cent) expressed support for one provincewide system for teacher performance evaluation. Further, the majority of respondents expressed a desire for principals having primary input into the evaluation of teachers' performance (83.5 per cent), and that input from students (60 2 per cent), other teachers (57.9 per cent), and parents (57.1 per cent) should also be considered as part of the evaluation process.

There were some concerns expressed that, because teachers are in a position of authority over students, it is difficult for students to give performance feedback directly to a teacher, as indicated in the following comment:

> The current method for addressing an issue with a teacher is that the student, parent or coworker talks directly to the teacher before bringing the issue to a higher level of authority, i.e., the principal. This does not work. Students do not want their parents to talk to their teachers about issues as students are concerned about the ramifications. Unfortunately the current method prevents teachers from receiving the necessary feedback and from making the needed change because students are not willing to put their grades and situations at stake.
>
> – Consultation participant

31 Task Force for Teaching Excellence, *What We Heard: Community and Stakeholder Consultations* (2014), Appendix E: Alberta School Boards Association's Submission to the Task Force, p.176

32 Ibid.

Those participating in the Task Force survey said principals should be the first point of contact in dealing with teacher performance issues, including investigating complaints and referring issues to the proper authorities. Further, district leaders should support the principal and act only when an issue is not being handled, at the school level.

Review by other jurisdictions

In reviewing the practice of other jurisdictions, the Task Force noted that the practice of regular teacher evaluation is becoming universally accepted.

> The question facing most countries is not whether to have a teacher-evaluation system, but how to get it right.[33]

Several jurisdictions, including Ontario, New York State, Singapore, New Zealand, Australia, England, Wales and Northern Ireland, have implemented a comprehensive approach to review teacher performance on a consistent and regular basis.

The Task Force also noted that recertification is a central element governance systems that provide assurance of teacher currency and competence. For example, in New Zealand, teachers are required to renew their registration and license to practice every five years, with a recent recommendation to reduce this to three years. The requirements for renewal center on the applicant having maintained a specified level of practice, the completion of professional development, and an assessment of continued competence as assessed by the principal.

New Zealand is attempting to further strengthen this system by placing more emphasis on "the renewal of the practicing certificate as a way to assess the continued competence of teachers" within a clearly identified scope of practice (e.g., early childhood, secondary).[34]

Note that in New Zealand recertification is part of a broader system of assuring teacher competence, which includes mentorship and regular assessment of competence. Teachers are assessed by the principal against standards set out by the New Zealand Teachers Council.

While New Zealand and some other jurisdictions[35] have introduced teacher recertification processes, it is important to note that recertification is not the general rule – most countries do not have such systems. That is, in most jurisdictions, upon completing a two-year probationary period, teachers receive permanent certificates (i.e., authority to teach). Teachers are not required to participate in regular professional development to maintain their certification. As is the case in Alberta, in most jurisdictions it is a long and arduous process for dealing with issues of teacher competence.

33 Teacher Quality: The 2013 International Summit on the Teaching Profession, p.23.

34 *A 21st Century Body for the Education Profession*, New Zealand, p.16

35 While there are similarities in other parts of the world, some do things differently. For example, it is becoming more typical in some US states that teacher contracts are of a fixed time frame and require renewal at the end of the contract. Some states, including Idaho and Florida, are now requiring school jurisdictions to award only fixed-term contracts.

Analysis

The Task Force believes that to ensure teacher currency and competency, and ultimately achieve practice excellence, a provincewide system of performance evaluation must be introduced. Whatever system is developed, it must be consistently administered and built on fairness and trust.

> Establishing trust is absolutely essential to the development and implementation of evaluation systems – trust in the fairness of the measures, trust in the competence of the evaluators, trust in the purpose of the evaluation, and trust that it will deliver the promised outcomes.[36]

For many, a recertification process for teachers would require principals to regularly supervise and evaluate teacher practice and would require district leaders to regularly supervise and evaluate the practice of the principal. Also, through recertification, teachers would be expected to remain current in their practice. The Alberta Teachers' Association, in its submission to the Task Force, supports a continuing education requirement that would ensure currency of teacher practice:

> Like other professions, it is important that the teaching profession move to a continuous growth model for all certificate holders, tied to the right to practice. It is also important that the profession itself, through the Association and not the government, establish the requirement, maintain it and enforce it. Certificate holders who could not meet continuing education requirements would be unable to remain members of the profession.[37]

It is important to note that the Alberta Teachers' Association envisions a system that they would maintain and enforce.

Ongoing practice supervision and regular evaluations would give the principal or district leader opportunities to identify and bring recommended areas for growth to the teacher's or principal's attention. In that way, a teacher can improve his or her practice and demonstrate suitability to retain the authority to teach in Alberta.

Rather than a recertification process for Alberta teachers, the Task Force recommends a system of 'maintenance of certification.' In such a system, a teacher's certification would be maintained on the basis of an attestation by a superintendent of schools.

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36 *Teacher Quality: The 2013 International Summit on the Teaching Profession*, p.21.

37 Task Force for Teaching Excellence, *What We Heard: Community and Stakeholder Consultations* (20140, Appendix E: The Alberta Teachers' Association Submission to the Task Force, p.151

RECOMMENDATION 21: Maintenance of certification for teachers

That the Ministry of Education introduce a system of maintenance of certification for teachers to assure career-long professional growth, currency and competency.

That the following elements be considered for the system of maintenance of certification for teachers:

- Evaluation for purposes of maintenance of certification would occur every five years (following the interim certification period).
    - Evaluation processes shall follow principles of natural justice and due process, and be aligned with the evaluation process outlined in the *Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy*.
    - Provisions for a one-year extension to the five-year evaluation period would be granted by the Minister of Education under exceptional circumstances (application must be made by the superintendent to the Minister).
- Every year, principals would advise teachers in writing on their progress to qualify for maintenance of certification.
- The Ministry of Education would maintain the certification of a teacher on the attestation of the superintendent. The superintendent's attestation would be informed by the principal who would seek input broadly from parents, other teachers, and students (i.e., 360° feedback), and would be based on the demonstration of continued growth, currency, and competency in accordance with the *Teacher Quality Standard*.
- Teachers would be required to prepare a teaching excellence dossier of evidence of their professional growth, currency and competency.
- The system would include appeal processes, and processes for a teacher to regain his or her certificate.

Assurance of school leaders

In Alberta, and most of Canada, principals are evaluated by district leaders. However, the application of provincial practice standards, the evaluation process, and the frequency of evaluation vary. School authorities in Alberta must develop local policies and procedures for teacher and school leader evaluation on the basis of the provincial *Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy*.

As was the case for teachers, most participants in the Task Force survey (72 per cent) support one provincewide system for the evaluation of principals. Just under half of Albertans indicate a system of annual evaluation should be implemented (similar to

the opinion of Albertans on the frequency of teacher evaluations). It should be noted, however, that district leaders, school leaders, and teachers were less likely than other respondents to support the annual evaluation of principals.

In our consultations, a related theme emerged, summarized as follows:

> Principals should have to show professional growth. Their evaluation document should be exactly the same as they prepare on their teachers, only measuring different things.
>
> – Consultation participant

Our recommendations related to the periodic review of a principal's suitability to hold the designation of principal are similar to those related to maintenance of certification for teachers.

RECOMMENDATION 22: Maintenance of designation for school leaders

That the Ministry of Education establish a framework for the maintenance of administrative designation for principals every five years to assure leadership excellence.

RECOMMENDATION 23. Principal performance

That the Ministry of Education develop a provincewide system to provide principals with annual written feedback on their practice to assure leadership excellence in accordance with the school leader practice standard. While the system should be provincewide, it should accommodate any unique circumstances of the individual school or school authority.

Empowering school leaders to assure teaching excellence

Participants in our consultations expressed low levels of confidence in the process of assuring proper conduct and practice competence of teachers, areas in which principals will need to play a greater role if the recommendations of this report are adopted. Thus, while there is a belief among Albertans who participated in the consultation process that principals have an appropriate level of authority (75 per cent), this belief is rooted in the context of their current role and expectations.

Many educators who participated in our consultations expressed concern that principals are restricted in their instructional leadership role, particularly in addressing issues of teacher competence. They cite in particular the professional obligations of principals as co-members with teachers in the Alberta Teachers' Association, and the complexity of current processes for dealing with competence issues. Some participants felt that

removing principals from membership in the Alberta Teachers' Association would remove these restrictions, allowing principals more autonomy to deal with teacher competence issues. This led to Task Force discussions as to whether principals should retain membership in the Alberta Teachers' Association.

For those that believe principals should not remain as members of the Alberta Teachers' Association, the rationale is related to the fundamental issue of conflicting loyalties, i.e., that a principal simply cannot undertake a full managerial role, be answerable to the school authority, and put the interests of students before those of teachers, while retaining membership in the same professional association as teachers:

> Principals need to be able to function without mixed loyalties. Principals need to be unencumbered to do their jobs and to be loyal to the educational system, students and parents. As it relates to the human resource function, principals need to be leaders, supervisors and managers of their staff.
>
> – Consultation participant

The contrary view is that there is significant value in principals being part of the same professional association as teachers. The belief is that principals are currently sufficiently empowered to address issues of teacher conduct and competence but lack the confidence and capacity to undertake related duties, something that appropriate preparation and ongoing professional development would address. Concern was also expressed that removal of principals from membership in the Alberta Teachers' Association would restrict their ability to undertake teaching duties as part of their role: this would be of particular concern in small rural schools where principals have both administrative and teaching duties.

What happens in other provinces? In most provinces, principals are members of the same professional association as teachers; however, since 1988, the British Columbia Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association has been an autonomous organization that represents the interests of school leaders. It provides legal services and professional development opportunities for over 2,000 members. In 1998, the Ontario government removed school principals from teachers' professional associations and created the Ontario Principals' Council. The Council advocates for the interests of principals and provides legal services and professional development opportunities for its 5,000 members.

The Task Force believes action must be taken to enable and empower principals to effectively address issues of teacher competence and conduct by eliminating the impediments caused by conflicting loyalties, but believes this can be accomplished without removing principals from the Alberta Teachers' Association. It is also important that, as we further empower principals, they be provided the necessary support to effectively fulfill their related duties.

RECOMMENDATION 24: Empowering principals

That principals be empowered to effectively undertake the human resource function related to teachers in accordance with the recommendations in this report. This may require changes in legislation. If this empowerment is not possible, we recommend consideration be given to removing principals from the Alberta Teachers' Association to ensure this empowerment.

Further advice: Principals should be required to complete a professional learning program, endorsed by the Ministry of Education, to understand and fulfill duties related to this enhanced role.

The regulatory model

Regulatory models for the certification of teachers, governance of the teaching profession and legislation on the role of teachers, school leaders and district leaders, differ across Canada and internationally. The central issue is where professional functions such as practice review, professional development and codes of conduct should reside. These functions can reside with a teachers' association, with the government, or with a professional college that is independent of the union functions of professional associations such as the Alberta Teachers' Association. The current model in Alberta is that professional functions related to teacher practice review are shared between the Alberta Teachers' Association and the Ministry of Education.

The Alberta Teachers' Association is both a professional association and a union, with the latter functions related to collective bargaining of employment contracts and the protection of teachers from unreasonable actions of the public, school authorities and educational leaders; that is, ensuring that the interest of its members is paramount. This leads to a perception, heard throughout the consultation process, that the interests of the Alberta Teachers' Association's members take precedence over the interests of students. The Task Force believes that the interests of students must always come first.

There are three basic regulatory models through which professional functions are governed:

1. A teachers' association that includes union functions.
2. The provincial government assumes governance with an independent teachers' union, or
3. A professional teachers' college with an independent teachers' union.

The first best describes Alberta, the second British Columbia, and the third Ontario; however, the above descriptions simplify the range of regulatory models. For example, in Alberta one of the core professional functions, the certification of teachers, is governed by the Ministry of Education. It is probably best to describe Alberta's model as one of shared responsibility for professional functions.

Some may ask why draw a sharp line between union and professional functions of teachers' associations? Again, the central issue relates to whom the associations serve; i.e., are decisions made in the interest of students or of members? From the standpoint of its union functions, including collective bargaining, the Alberta Teachers' Association is understandably and legally most concerned with the interests of teachers. A potential and perceived conflict arises when the professional arm of the Alberta Teachers' Association espouses to have the best interest of students and the public at the heart of its decisions.

The Kendel Report (For the Sake of Students)

The Government of Saskatchewan recently commissioned a review of its regulatory model for teachers. It is worth noting the findings of the review, as Saskatchewan's regulatory system is very similar to Alberta's system.

The report, *For the Sake of Students*,[38] strongly recommends the separation of professional functions from the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation to a professional teachers' college. The interest of the student is central to the recommendations of the report writer, Dr. Dennis Kendal. He expresses a belief that the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation (STF) has a "what's good for teachers is good for students and the public" approach to its role; however, he concludes that it is "governed by teachers for teachers."

He states that generally:

> ... professionals [i.e., not just teachers] are sometimes shockingly naïve and insensitive to real and perceived conflicts of interest between their goals and aspirations, and the goals and aspirations of the public.[39]

The strongest evidence for this conclusion provided by Kendel relates to how issues of member conduct and competence are managed. He concludes that the structures and systems safeguard the interests of the member over public interest; for the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation this means that the interest of teachers trumps the interests of students and the public. In examining practice review processes, he concluded that they are not undertaken in the interests of students. He further views the "remarkably small number" of written complaints investigated as further evidence of this inherent conflict of interest.

Kendel acknowledges the power imbalance between teacher and student, concluding that:

> The risk of student harm from unethical or incompetent teachers is substantial. In the course of this review I have been particularly attentive to the risks faced by more vulnerable students.[40]

38 Dr. Dennis Kendel, *For the Sake of Students*, 2013.

39 Dr. Dennis Kendel, *For the Sake of Students*, 2013, p.12.

40 Ibid, p.65.

Kendel traced the evolution of teacher professional associations in Canada, including the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation:

> Notwithstanding the fact that these associations were effectively teachers' unions, governments accommodated, in part, their requests for regulatory powers.[41]

> Perhaps because they recognize that provincial teacher associations are effectively professional unions, no provincial government to date has entrusted these organizations with the full spectrum of regulatory powers and responsibilities entrusted to professional regulatory bodies that are committed exclusively to a regulatory mission.[42]

Kendel goes on to examine the three regulatory models described above. He rejects the existing model, where the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation retains both a professional function and a union function. He recommends a professional teachers' college model over a government model.

So strong is his belief that the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation should no longer function as both a professional association and a union that he recommends that:

> If the teaching profession in Saskatchewan is not prepared to support regulation through a College of Teachers, with considerable regret, I would recommend regulation by the Ministry of Education as the alternative option.[43]

As previously indicated, the Task Force discussed at length the appropriate regulatory model for Alberta. All agreed that the regulatory model must encompass the governance shifts envisioned by *Inspiring Education*, most particularly the shift to more assurance of teaching excellence.

The Task Force prefers to retain a model of shared responsibility between government and the Alberta Teachers' Association to address the issues identified. However, if the necessary adjustments are not possible under a shared model, the model should change.

RECOMMENDATION 25: The regulatory (governance) model

That the professional regulatory model for teachers be modified to implement the recommendations of this report. The Task Force believes that this can be achieved through collaborative transformation of the existing model in which the Alberta Teachers' Association continues to have both union and professional functions. If that is not possible, either a Ministry-based model or a separate professional college of teachers is recommended for consideration.

41 Ibid, p.41.

42 Dr. Dennis Kendel, *For the Sake of Students*, 2013, p.41.

43 Ibid, p. 84.

10 FINAL THOUGHTS

Taken holistically, the Task Force believes the recommendations in this report will enable Alberta to achieve teaching excellence within the vision of *Inspiring Education*. The recommendations will ensure:

For every child, in every class, there is an excellent teacher.

It is the Task Force's hope and belief that the recommendations can be implemented through a consultative process involving all stakeholders. These groups have important roles to play in furthering the vision of *Inspiring Education*. Further, the Task Force believes the Ministry of Education must devote adequate human and financial resources to achieve this transformation.

In consultations, issues were raised that were beyond the scope of the Task Force. Many consultation participants discussed the need for a culture shift in our schools and the need to engage parents in that change. Others suggested the provincial curriculum needs to be more responsive to the needs of students in the 21st century. In this regard, the Task Force is pleased to note that the Ministry of Education is revising the provincial curriculum to align with the vision of *Inspiring Education*. Finally, to achieve that vision, many consultation participants noted that a shift in governance is required. While outside our mandate, we agree that governance issues should be examined and addressed.

11 APPENDICES

A: Glossary

B: Task Force Biographies

C: Task Force Terms of Reference

D: Admission to Teacher Preparation Programs

E: Teacher Preparation Programs – Pathways to Earning a Bachelor of Education Degree

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APPENDIX A: **Glossary**

ASBA – Alberta School Boards Association

Accountability – Being accountable to perform as promised.

ASCA – Alberta School Councils' Association

Assurance – The promise to do something; the measurement and reporting of the performance of a promised action.

ATA – Alberta Teachers' Association

Beginning teacher – A teacher new to the profession.

Citizenship – The quality of an individual's response to membership in a community.

Competency – An interrelated set of attitudes, skills and knowledge that is drawn upon and applied to a particular context for successful learning and living.

Currency – The state of being current; up-to-date.

District leaders – Superintendents, associate superintendents and assistant superintendents.

Evaluation – The formal process of gathering and recording information or evidence over a period of time and the application of reasoned professional judgment by a principal in determining whether one or more aspects of the teaching of a teacher exceeds, meets or does not meet the *Teaching Quality Standard*.

Incompetent professional practice – The inability of a teacher to consistently meet the requirements of the *Teaching Quality Standard*.

Induction – The support and guidance provided to beginning teachers in the early stages of their careers as well as to those teachers new to the province.

Instructional days – Days when both teachers and students are at school.

Internship – An extended period of supervised practice following completion of a teaching degree and prior to probationary certification; not part of the undergraduate program.

Maintenance of certification – Regular study and/or testing to retain a valid teaching certificate.

Mentorship – Regular counsel or guidance provided by a trusted, experienced person.

OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

Operational days – Days when only teachers are at the school.

Practice review process – A process used to investigate and resolve issues related to conduct and competency.

Practicum – A course of study designed for the preparation of teachers that involves the supervised practical application of previously studied theory; also known as a field placement.

Professional competence – The capacity to function according to applicable standards, i.e., the *Teaching Quality Standard*.

Professional conduct – A mode or standard of personal behaviour in accordance with applicable standards, i.e., the *Teaching Quality Standard*.

Professional functions – Functions that serve the public interest, including the maintenance and enforcement of standards.

Regulatory model – The organizational structure that exercises authority over the profession, whether it be a teaching association, a union, an independent college, or a government body or department.

School authority – The term "school authority" includes school jurisdictions, accredited-funded private schools and private early childhood services operators. The term "school jurisdiction" refers to an Alberta public or separate school district, school division, regional division, Francophone Regional authority, charter school, the Lloydminster Public School Division and the Lloydminster Roman Catholic Separate School Division.

School boards – Statutory corporations elected by citizens to act for the legislature in their local schools and communities. The *Education Act* assigns them mandatory duties, such as to establish policies respecting the provision of educational services and programs, as well to maintain, repair, furnish and keep in good order all its real and personal property. The *Act* also assigns them discretionary duties to charge fees and make rules.

School leaders – Principals, associate principals, assistant principals, and vice-principals.

Standard – A common description or threshold of effective practice.

Superintendent – Similar to a chief executive officer, the superintendent is responsible for educational leadership, financial management, student welfare, board relations, managing staff, planning and reporting, communications, community involvement and other management aspects of running a school authority. The specific role depends on the school authority.

Supervision – The gathering and communication of information to help improve performance. As it relates to teachers it is defined as the on-going process by which a principal carries out duties in respect to teachers and teaching required under Section 20 of the *School Act* and exercises educational leadership.

Transparent – Open and readily understood.

Unprofessional conduct – Behaviour by a teacher that is detrimental to the best interests of students, the public or the teaching profession.

APPENDIX B: Task Force Biographies

Dr. Glenn Feltham - Chair

Dr. Glenn Feltham assumed the role of NAIT's sixth president and CEO on March 1, 2011. He has an extensive academic and professional background. Dr. Feltham holds a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Alberta, a Bachelor of Science with a major in Business Administration and an MBA from the University of Montana, an LLB from Queen's University Faculty of Law and a PhD from the University of Waterloo School of Accountancy. Owing to a unique family history, he brings to NAIT a keen interest in the role of entrepreneurism in strengthening the Alberta and Canadian economy, as well as a deep appreciation of the value of community. Before he joined NAIT, Dr. Feltham was dean of the I.H. Asper School of Business at the University of Manitoba. His career has been defined by service to both his community and profession. His roles and achievements include: Potash Corp. Chair (Chuck and Norma Childers' Chair) for Saskatchewan Enterprise and Department Head of Accounting and at the College of Commerce, University of Saskatchewan; Director of Undergraduate Business Programs in the School of Business & Economics at Wilfrid Laurier University; chair of the board of Canada's Royal Winnipeg Ballet; board member with the Winnipeg Airports Authority Inc.; and board member with the Crown Corporations Council of Manitoba. Professionally, Dr. Feltham holds a designation as a Certified Management Accountant and a Fellowship with the Society of Management Accountants of Canada, is past president of the Canadian Academic Accounting Association, and was previously enrolled as a Barrister and Solicitor of the Law Society of Alberta.

Sandra Jansen – Vice Chair

Sandra Jansen was elected as the Member of the Legislative Assembly for Calgary-North West on April 23, 2012. She was sworn in as Associate Minister of Family and Community Safety on August 1, 2013. She is a member of the government's Operations Committee and serves on the Ministerial Working Group on Families and Communities. Previous appointments include serving as Deputy Government Whip, chair of the Calgary caucus and co-chair of the Alberta Film Advisory Council. Ms. Jansen earned a broadcasting diploma from the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology and later studied French at McGill University. She also holds a master's degree in professional communications from Royal Roads University. Ms. Jansen is an experienced journalist, having spent 23 years in the field, including 10 years as a national news anchor at CTV News Channel in Toronto. She also hosted the City TV Calgary show *Your City* from 2007 to 2010. Ms. Jansen later served as Premier Alison Redford's southern Alberta communications manager from October 2011 to March 2012. A passionate advocate and dedicated volunteer, over the years she has been a spokesperson and a volunteer for the United Way, Calgary Health Trust, and Ronald McDonald House and a board member at the Calgary Girls' School. Ms. Jansen is an acrylic artist and has donated more than 50 paintings to various charities in the Calgary area.

Naresh Bhardwaj

Naresh Bhardwaj was elected to his second term as a Member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta for Edmonton-Ellerslie on April 23, 2012. In addition to his duties as an MLA, Mr. Bhardwaj is Associate Minister of Persons with Disabilities and serves as chair of the capital region caucus. He also sits on the following committees: the Legislative Review Committee, the Standing Committee on Private Bills, and the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future. Previously, he served as Chair on the Steering Committee for *Setting the Direction*, which recommended a framework to reform the provision of services and supports to Alberta students with special education needs. Mr. Bhardwaj moved to Alberta with his family in 1976. He became a journeyman automotive mechanic in 1983 before going back to school and graduating from the U of A with a double major. He then spent the next 18 years working as a teacher in Pincher Creek, Whitecourt, Red Deer, Calgary and Edmonton, teaching predominantly automotives, mathematics and physical education. Mr. Bhardwaj has been actively involved with Edmonton communities for over 36 years, serving on many associations, establishing Youth Link, a youth employment training program, and coaching soccer at the community league level and for Juventus U-18.

David C. Dorward

David C. Dorward was elected as the Member of the Legislative Assembly for Edmonton-Gold Bar on April 23, 2012. On May 8, 2012, Premier Alison Redford named Mr. Dorward as a member of Alberta's Treasury Board, and he was appointed deputy chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts on May 24, 2012. In addition, he is also a member of the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund, the Standing Committee on Alberta´s Economic Futures, and the Select Special Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee. Mr. Dorward has also recently been appointed as the Deputy Whip. He is a graduate of the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology and the University of Alberta, and was recognized by NAIT as one of its top 50 graduates of the last 50 years. An experienced Chartered Accountant and Certified Management Accountant, Mr. Dorward founded his own company, Dorward & Company Chartered Accountants LLP in 1994. In 2009, his company was a finalist for the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce´s Small Business Owner of the Year Award and he received an honorable mention for the Alberta Outstanding Community Leader Award, presented by the then Lieutenant Governor, Norman Kwong. Throughout his life Mr. Dorward has contributed to his community in many ways. He has served on numerous local and provincial boards, including the Edmonton Epilepsy Association, Basketball Alberta and the Children's Ability Fund. He founded Edmonton's Saville Community Sports Centre (GO Centre), the largest community and sport centre of its type in North America. As well, he serves as president of the Edmonton Grads Basketball Centre, the group that operates basketball programming at the GO Centre. In addition to coaching youth basketball for more than 12 years, he organized the basketball program for many Edmonton-Gold Bar communities. Mr. Dorward has also served as a United Way director of finance and administration.

Everett McDonald

Everett McDonald was elected as the Member of the Legislative Assembly for Grande Prairie-Smoky on April 23, 2012. He also serves on the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices (deputy chair), the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future, the Special Standing Committee on Members' Service, the Select Special Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee, and the Select Special Chief Electoral Officer Search Committee. Mr. McDonald was recently appointed as chair of the MLA implementation team working on the review and implementation of the retail market review recommendations to strengthen Alberta's retail electricity market. First elected to the County of Grande Prairie No. 1 Council in 1992, Mr. McDonald served in various capacities during his tenure, including as chair of numerous commissions and boards and as deputy reeve. He then served as reeve from 2004 until his election to the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. Mr. McDonald was the chairman of the Crystal Creek Conservation Society and also represented the county on various provincial committees, including the Alberta Growth Summit and the provincial Mountain Pine Beetle Advisory Committee. In addition, he was also a founding board member of Aquatera, a municipally owned utility corporation, the first of its kind in the province.

David Fraser

As Executive Director, Corporate Services with Edmonton Public Schools, Mr. Fraser is responsible for overseeing a number of central departments including Finance, Human Resources, Communications, Planning and Transportation, Facilities, Technology and the District's Foundation. Prior to taking on this role, David was the Managing Director of Human Resources with Edmonton Public Schools. He has been the district's Chief Negotiator for the past ten years, overseeing negotiations with the ATA and three CUPE Locals (support, custodial and maintenance staff). He was a member of the ASBA negotiating team during the 2012-2013 tripartite talks and he has been a member of the External Advisory Committee for Alberta Education's Workforce Planning Initiative for the past five years. David has over thirty years experience in Human Resources in a variety of roles and he holds a Bachelor of Commerce degree in Industrial Relations from the University of Alberta.

Dr. Sharon Friesen

Dr. Sharon Friesen the Vice Dean and the Associate Dean of Professional and Community Engagement in the Werklund School of Education at the University of Calgary. She is also the one of the founding partners and the current President of the Galileo Educational Network. Her research interests include the ways in which K-12 educational structures, curriculum and learning need to be reinvented for a knowledge/learning society. She has specific interests in and a deep passion for: (i) the promotion of deep intellectual engagement, (ii) the ability to create learning environments that require sustained work with ideas (iii) the pervasiveness of networked digital technologies that open up new ways of knowing, leading, teaching, working and living in the world. She is the recipient of numerous awards including: the Pacific Institute for the Mathematical Sciences 2007 Education Prize, the 2007 Calgary Stampede Legacy Award for Innovation and the 1999 Prime Minister's Award for Teaching Excellence. She has co-authored three books, one

which won the 2004 American Education Research Association Book Award for Curriculum Studies. Dr. Friesen was a member of the *Inspiring Education* Steering Committee.

Dr. Irene Lewis

Dr. Irene Lewis became President and CEO of SAIT Polytechnic in 1998 and retired from that position in 2013. Prior to joining SAIT, she was President of an Edmonton college and led its transition to a board-governed institution. Beginning her career as a teacher in rural Alberta, she later worked in Singapore for over five years, where she had a central role in shaping that country's vision for education. Dr. Lewis has written textbooks, and taught in primary, secondary and post-secondary systems. She was named as one of Canada's Top 100 Most Powerful Women for 2010 and 2012. In 2010, she received an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from the University of Calgary - its highest honour. She was presented with the Chair Academy's 2009 International Exemplary Leader Award and was recognized with the 2008 Distinguished Leadership Award from the Council of Advancement and Support of Education. She was named a Woman of Vision by Global Calgary in 2008.She was one of Alberta's Most Respected Corporate Leaders in 2007 and one of Alberta's Most Influential Citizens in 2005. Dr. Lewis received the Premier's Gold Award of Excellence, a Queen Elizabeth II Golden Jubilee Medal and a University of Alberta Alumni Honour Award. She continues to serve as an adjunct Professor for the University of Alberta as well as in advisory roles for various organizations focused on education.

Dr. Craig Loewen

Dr. Craig Loewen is the Dean of Education at the University of Lethbridge. He is a long serving faculty member, U of L alumnus (BEd '84) and mathematics education expert whose research includes how students learn and how teachers can promote and enrich student learning. He has received the University of Lethbridge Distinguished Teaching Award, and the Educational Research Award from the Alberta Teachers' Association, which acknowledged his involvement in pre-service and in-service mathematics education. In addition, he was appointed a Friend of the Mathematics Council of the Alberta Teachers' Association and was inducted into the University of Lethbridge Alumni Honour Society in 2011.

Mackenzie Martin

Mackenzie Martin is a student leader focused on education and public health. In particular, she is passionate about the issues facing girls. As a young feminist, she is an active community leader who has been engaged in spearheading and organizing numerous community events many of which highlight the issues facing girls locally and globally. For example, Mackenzie organized a Conference for 1,400 students to acknowledge the UN's first International Day of the Girl. In recognition of her community service and leadership, Mackenzie has been the recipient of many honors and awards including: the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal; Premier's Citizenship Award; YWCA Young Woman of Distinction Award; Queen's Golden Jubilee Citizenship Medal; TD Scholarship for Community Leadership; John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights Champion Award (Youth); Millar Western Entrance Leadership Scholarship (University of Alberta); Bill Swift Memorial Scholarship (University of Alberta) and A Friends of the University Entrance Scholarship (University of Alberta). Her perspectives

on policy and the importance of education have also been shaped by working as a Page at the Legislature and her year as a member of the Minister's Student Advisory Panel (Speak Out). She is proud to be an Albertan and attends the University of Alberta where she studies in the field of education.

Brent McDonough

Brent McDonough is a teacher with extensive experience at the secondary school level. He is currently a Sessional/Field Experiences Associate/IB advisor to the Masters in Educational Studies Program in the Faculty of Education, University of Alberta. Globally, Mr. McDonough continues to be involved with educational initiatives with the International Baccalaureate Organization. Mr. McDonough is also a member of the Education Society of Edmonton and an executive member of the Friends of the University of Alberta. He has served a six-year term on the University of Alberta Senate and a three-year term on the University of Alberta Alumni Association, and is past chair of the Edmonton Public Library Board. The province honored Mr. McDonough for his contributions to the community with an Alberta Centennial Medal in 2005. Mr. McDonough was co-chair of the *Inspiring Education* Steering Committee.

Michele Mulder

Michelle Mulder's interest in public education began when her children were in elementary school through her involvement in the school, particularly the school council. She ran for the position of school trustee and was elected in 1989. A trustee for 15 years, Ms. Mulder served as chairman of the Battle River Regional School Division from 1995 to 2000. She was elected to the position of Vice President of the Alberta School Boards Association in 1998 and served as its President from 2001 until 2004. Ms. Mulder also served as president of the Canadian School Boards Association 2003-2004. Today, she is the Executive Director of the Alberta School Councils' Association (ASCA), a provincial organization dedicated to parent engagement in education primarily through school councils. Ms. Mulder's interest and passion are focused in the areas of leadership, policy and governance. She promotes building mutually respectful and beneficial relationships among all participants in public education that will ultimately enhance student learning success.

Andy Neigel

Andy Neigel earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Forestry at the University of Alberta and a Forestry Diploma at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology and has provided strong operational and corporate leadership in the forest industry for more than 25 years. Mr. Neigel's career in the forestry business has taken him throughout both British Columbia and Alberta, and includes teaching assignments at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology and University of Alberta forestry schools. Most recently, Mr. Neigel held a number of positions at Alberta-Pacific Forest Industries Inc., ending his 14-year tenure as the General Manager and Vice President of Operations. He is a Registered Professional Forester both in Alberta and in British Columbia and is a graduate of the Queen's School of Business Executive and Leadership Programs. Mr. Neigel is currently a Board Director and President and CEO of CAREERS: the Next Generation Foundation. Mr. Neigel has served as a member of Alberta Education's *Inspiring Education* Steering Committee and a Board

Director for Athabasca University, the Northern Alberta Development Council, the Forest Products Association of Canada, the Pulp and Paper Institute of Canada, the Forest Engineering Research Institute of Canada and Portage College. Andy and his wife Kathi reside on a farm south of Athabasca.

Shelley Ralston

Shelley Ralston is an executive with sales, marketing, operations, general management and human resources expertise. She is a change agent with strengths in building organizational capacity, strategic planning and excellence in results delivery. Ms. Ralston was appointed to the Red Deer College Board of Governors in June 2010 and in March 2012, she was appointed Chair of the Board. Ms. Ralston is also the Director of Talent and Culture for Xerox Canada and partner in a small business - Graden Systems. She is a past board member of the Red Deer Rotary Club; a board member of the Women's Leadership Foundation, past cabinet member of the Central Alberta United Way and a member with the Alberta Chapter for Room to Read. She was also a committee member for the Central Alberta Leadership Centre. Shelley was the recipient of the Women of Excellence award in 2008. Ms. Ralston, her husband and their two children live in Red Deer County.

Laurie Thompson

Laurie L. Thompson was appointed Principal of Kikino School, on the Kikino Métis Settlement, Northern Lights School Division in 2005. Ms. Thompson began her teaching career at Amisk Community School, on the Beaver Lake First Nation, in 1993 upon graduating from the University of Alberta with a Bachelor of Education Degree. She returned to her home community of Kikino after teaching grade one at Amisk School for five years and continued her teaching career in Kikino. Ms. Thompson completed a Master of Arts in Leadership and Training Masters program from Royal Roads University in 2006. Advocacy for Aboriginal children and families began early for Laurie as she sat on a Special Education Review panel under Dr. Lyle Oberg. She later sat on and then chaired Child and Family Services Authority Métis Settlements for ten years. Recently, Ms. Thompson was a member of the *Inspiring Education* Steering Committee, followed by an appointment to the Northlands Community Engagement Team. She continues to serve her community in various capacities through the church, volunteering, and through many school-community partnerships. Under her leadership, Kikino School has been recognized for Excellence in Inclusive Education practice and was recognized as one of the top 25 Schools in Canada in Today's Parent magazine.

Ron Young

As a teacher and principal in rural Alberta, Ron Young brings significant experience to discussions on education. When faced with the closure of the local school at 4 Wing Cold Lake, he stepped in and organized a successful private school that has been a foundation of success for families at Cold Lake's military base. Shortly after arriving in Grand Centre, Mr. Young ran for town council. He was the youngest councilor ever elected. He went on to win a total of 9 consecutive elections, none by acclamation. He retired from council in 2004, after serving longer than anyone in the history of the city.

APPENDIX C: **Task Force Terms of Reference**

A. Context

Several major ministry initiatives, including but not limited to *Inspiring Education*: A Dialogue with Albertans, *Setting the Direction for Special Education in Alberta*, *Speak Out: The Alberta Student Engagement Initiative* and *Literacy First: A Plan for Action*, have provided Albertans with an opportunity to participate in dialogues about the kind of education that students need now and in the future. Alberta's new *Education Act* is a significant first step toward bringing to life a vision for education set out in *Inspiring Education*, where all Alberta children become engaged thinkers and ethical citizens with an entrepreneurial spirit and thereby contribute to healthy, inclusive communities and a thriving Alberta economy.

Education in Alberta needs to be delivered differently if Alberta's education system is to become truly collaborative and inclusive. The system must encourage and support creativity, innovation and entrepreneurialism to attain the highest possible standards and to ensure every student's success—academically and developmentally.

In this context, the public discussion will shift from a focus on a new vision for education to a focus on the ways we will achieve the policy shifts identified in *Inspiring Education*:

- more focus on education rather than school
- the learner rather than the system
- building competencies rather than delivering content
- technology to support the creation and sharing of knowledge rather than to support teaching

Student learning is at the center of this profession. Educators should recognize and consider the complexities of the 21st century student. Educators remain the primary variable to student learning and success in the 21st century. Educators should continue to be learners themselves and remain current in sound, research-based practice.

The successful transformation of Alberta's education system, as envisioned by *Inspiring Education*, to arm students with new competencies, to create an inclusive education system and to promote innovation and creativity will not happen with new policies and directives. The transformation as envisioned under *Inspiring Education* requires the commitment, expertise and dedicated service of all members of Alberta's education system; it will also require some realignment and co-ordination of their respective roles and responsibilities and will require an education system that empowers people to be innovative risk-takers and that acknowledges their expertise. Whereas all those involved in the education enterprise are important, it will be critical to have teachers who are inspired, resourced, supported and accountable in making the required, on-going shifts in their mind-sets and practices. The new legislation, which will complement the *Education Act*, is intended to achieve this.

B. Purpose

The Task Force for Teaching Excellence Panel will make recommendations emanating from its examination of relevant, current research, consultation with Albertans and a review of current provincial legislation, regulations and policy frameworks. Recommendations will align with the vision, values, guiding principles and policy shifts of *Inspiring Education* to provide for legislation and practice that will enable and assure teacher excellence and that educators will be innovative and current in their practice. All educators will be empowered to inspire and build strong relationships that fully engage students to aspire to and fulfill an entrepreneurial spirit. The new legislation will assure Albertans that all Alberta teachers and other educators are accountable for putting students first and providing high-quality educational experiences to children, youth and their families.

Mandate

The Task Force will:

1. Be guided by the vision, values, principles and policy shifts identified in *Inspiring Education*.
2. Provide input into a Consultation Plan and the Strategic Communications Plan.
3. Consult with Albertans and education stakeholders to review the existing environment and recommend revisions or make new suggestions to transform Alberta's education system, as envisioned by *Inspiring Education*. The strategic questions below could be used as a guideline for the discussions.
    a. What are the main contributing factors of excellence in teaching that Alberta should focus its priorities on?
    b. What is the definition of 'educator?' What does a 'world-class' educator look like in the 21st century?
    c. What are the characteristics that highly skilled educators demonstrate in providing a 'quality education' for students?
    d. Who should be authorized to educate students in Alberta? What should be their qualifications?
    e. What is the role of 21st century teachers? How is that different from the current role? What is their role in relation to others who educate in Alberta?
    f. Are there currently any barriers to excellence in teaching?
    g. What should a code of conduct for Alberta educators include?

h. What mechanisms should be in effect to assure Albertans that all educators, system leaders and administrators demonstrate career-long:
   - competencies
   - quality practice
   - proper conduct

i. How can we ensure entrepreneurialism is a trait in teachers?

j. What is the role of the community in the assurance of excellence?

4. The Task Force will consider:
   - what educators will need to work in a more flexible, innovative system that sees students reaching their full potential, not only within secondary education, but as lifelong learners; and
   - what processes and mechanisms are in place to ensure there is consistent excellence in teaching and that there will be assurances in place to maintain that excellence.
5. Review the adequacy and appropriateness of current provincial requirements for Alberta educators.
6. Identify strategies, processes and parameters used by other educational jurisdictions, including the mechanisms in place that assure their publics of the career-long competence, quality practice and proper conduct of all educators, that are worthy of consideration for the Alberta context. Consider strategies and processes used by other professions.
7. Identify how its proposed recommendations on policy and practices that lead to transformation of Alberta's education system might challenge the current assumptions and expectations of Albertans.

C. Deliverables

By January 31, 2014 the Task Force will prepare a Report to the Minister with recommendations on:

1. provincial requirements for those who are authorized to educate in Alberta's K-12 Education system
2. the mechanisms for assuring Albertans that all educators demonstrate career-long competency, quality practice and proper conduct throughout their careers
3. the establishment of provincial requirements for the following educators:
   - professionals:
     - teachers
     - school superintendents
     - school leaders

- occupational groups:
  - educational and therapeutic assistants
  - non-certificated instructors
  - school business managers

4. the mechanisms to effectively co-ordinate and align the respective roles of those educators
5. the establishment of provincial requirements in legislation, regulation and policy for educators, related to their:
   - roles
   - responsibilities/duties
   - qualifications
   - competencies
   - certification/credentialing
   - standards of practice
   - codes of conduct
   - preparation and ongoing professional learning
   - currency of practice
   - practice supervision and performance evaluation
   - employment contracts
6. the role of all stakeholders, but specifically the Ministry of Education, in enabling and assuring excellence in education
7. the role of the Ministry of Education in directing post-secondary training in the field of education
8. any other actions or policy shifts required to attain excellence in the rapidly evolving field of education

D. Membership

Task Force members will bring the perspectives of students, teachers, parents, entrepreneurs, post-secondary institutions, technology experts, education human resources personnel, the business community and government. A number of the members of the Task Force will be former members of the *Inspiring Education* and *Setting the Direction* steering committees to ensure the vision, values and policy shifts of *Inspiring Education* are in the forefront.

The Task Force may also engage with external experts who will be contracted by the ministry to provide advice and information.

The Minister will appoint members by Ministerial Order.

E. Remuneration

Task Force for Teaching Excellence members will be compensated as outlined in Appendix 3, Schedule 1, Part A of the Committee Remuneration Order (O.C. 466/2007). Task Force members will be reimbursed for expenses as outlined in the Subsistence and Travel Allowance Regulation Travel Meal and hospitality Expense Policy TB directive 04/2012.

F. Meetings

The frequency and dates for meetings of the Task Force will be determined by the Task Force Chair to ensure achievement of the Task Force's mandate within the timeline requirements.

G. Support

Ministry staff will provide support to the Task Force for Teaching Excellence throughout the full process as required.

APPENDIX D: **Admission to Teacher** PREPARATION PROGRAMS

The University of Alberta offers a four-year post-secondary program, a five-year degree program consecutive with another degree, and a post-degree program. Its minimum admission average is 70 per cent for high school applicants and a minimum grade point average (GPA) of 2.0 for post-secondary applicants. However, all admissions are competitive, and actual minimums may be higher.

The University of Calgary offers four-semester, two-year Bachelor of Education post-degree programs in both elementary and secondary education or a five-year concurrent degree program. Admission is competitive and based on GPA, at a minimum of 2.50, as well as specific course requirements.

The University of Lethbridge has broader criteria for its program, which can be completed as a concurrent degree program or a post-degree program. The major ranking criteria are the cumulative GPA and performance in Education 2500, which includes a recommendation from the instructor. Those applying directly from high school must meet the general entrance requirements of the University.

Six other schools, usually known as "university colleges," consider academic performance as well in admission of students, but they also consider teaching-related work and volunteer experience, personal essays, and references.

APPENDIX E: Teacher Preparation Programs – Pathways to Earning a Bachelor of Education Degree

In Alberta, most teachers have a Bachelor of Education degree from a post-secondary institution or another type of degree plus a Bachelor of Education degree from an approved teacher preparation program.

There are nine colleges and universities in Alberta that train teachers:

- The University of Alberta offers four-year degrees in both elementary and secondary education. It also offers a five-year combined-degrees program, an after-degree program, and an Aboriginal teacher preparation program.
- The University of Calgary offers four-semester, two-year degree programs in both elementary and secondary education. An elementary or secondary degree program can be taken following completion of or concurrent with another degree.
- The University of Lethbridge offers degree programs in both elementary and secondary education. Either program can be completed as a five-year combined degrees program or as an after-degree program.
- Concordia University College of Alberta (Edmonton) offers a two-year, after-degree program in elementary education.
- The King's University College (Edmonton) offers a two-year after-degree program in both elementary and secondary education.
- Canadian University College (central Alberta) offers a four-year degree program in both elementary and secondary education as well as a two-year, after-degree program.
- St. Mary's University College (Calgary) offers a two-year, after-degree program in elementary education.
- Mount Royal University (Calgary) offers a four-year degree program in elementary education.
- Ambrose University College (Calgary) offers a two-year, after-degree program in elementary education.

Also, several post-secondary institutions provide transfer programs for Bachelor of Education degrees.

APPENDIX F: Career Stages for Teachers in Australia, England and Wales

In **Australia**, there are four career stages for teachers:

Graduate teachers are those who have the required academic qualification, have completed approved teacher education and are now beginning their teaching career. If they are permanently employed, they are expected to achieve professional competency and full accreditation by the end of the first year.

Proficient teachers meet the requirements of full registration by having met the standards required at this level, demonstrated successful teaching experience and having successfully undertaken an induction program. Proficient teachers are able to tailor teaching programs to meet the needs of individuals and groups within the class and continue to record effective and ongoing professional development.

Highly accomplished teachers are recognized as very proficient and successful practitioners and seen by other teachers as having in-depth subject knowledge and pedagogy. They keep abreast of professional learning and contribute to the professional learning of others including the mentoring of beginning teachers. These teachers are advocates for the profession and their school.

Lead teachers are committed educators who have a record of outstanding teaching and are committed to enhancing the quality of teaching practice over time. They are knowledgeable about the latest developments in pedagogy and can articulate a vision of education to their students, peers, the profession and the wider community. They have outstanding interpersonal and leadership skills and may be employed in formal leadership positions within schools.

In **England and Wales**, there are four teacher categories:

Qualified teachers must have Quality Teacher Status accreditation.

Post threshold teachers are experienced teachers who are at the high point of their pay scale and wish to remain in the classroom. Crossing the threshold gives teachers access to an upper pay scale; however, it is not an automatic process. To cross the threshold a teacher must be eligible and, by a voluntary application, indicate their wish to be assessed against the post threshold standards. Decision whether a teacher meets the threshold standards rest with the principal.

Excellent teachers have length, breadth, and depth of experience, pedagogic excellence and high level coaching and mentoring skills. Their high level skills make them a role model for less-experienced teachers. In addition to their normal duties in the classroom, excellent teachers have a role in helping other teachers improve their effectiveness.

Advanced skill teachers are expected to take a leadership role in developing, implementing and evaluating policies and practices that contribute to education improvement. These teachers spend about 80 per cent of time in class and 20 per cent doing outreach work in other schools for the benefit of other teachers. Teachers receive this designation by applying for a vacancy and being assessed against advanced skill standards.

APPENDIX G: Principal Preparation in Other Provinces

Principals in Ontario, New Brunswick, Northwest Territories and Nunavut must complete preparatory programs prior to becoming a principal. Generally, the programs focus on leadership, instruction, management, personnel, accountability, and performance.

In Ontario, principals in schools with more than 125 students must complete Part 1 and Part 2 of a Principal's Qualifications Program. The program is 250 hours in length followed by a 60 hour practicum. Prior to acceptance in the program, candidates must have taught for a minimum of five years and must have completed some graduate work.

In New Brunswick, principals must have an interim principal's certificate followed by a permanent principal's certificate. To receive an interim certificate, candidates must have a minimum of five years of experience or the equivalent training and experience. Those with interim certificates must complete specified training plus a one-year practicum to receive their permanent principal's certificate.

In the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, principals require a certificate of eligibility. They are eligible to take an Educational Leadership Program following two years of teaching experience. The program is offered in two phases, one phase a year, during a 10-day block in July. Both phases are 120 hours each and a practicum follows each phase. A certificate of eligibility is valid for five years. Applicants must submit proof of professional development and a criminal record check for recertification.

The remaining provinces and the Yukon do not require school principals to be certificated for the administrative role. Manitoba stands out as a province that provides an opportunity to be certificated, but it is not mandated. Quebec is the only province that does not require school administrators to be certificated teachers, leaving the criteria up to school boards.

APPENDIX H: System of Assuring Conduct and Competence

What happens when a complaint of incompetence is made about a teacher?

The complaint is made to the school superintendent who does the initial investigation. If the complaint is unfounded, no further action is taken. If the superintendent concludes the teacher is not meeting the *Teaching Quality Standard*, the superintendent makes a report to the Executive Secretary of the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA).

The Executive Secretary then orders a hearing of the case by the ATA's Professional Practice Review Committee. This committee consists of two classroom teachers, one principal or vice-principal, a central office administrator, and a member of the public. The hearing is open to the public.

After hearing evidence, the committee determines whether the teacher is meeting the *Teaching Quality Standard*. The committee may recommend the cancellation or suspension of the teacher's ATA membership. It may also recommend that the Minister of Education cancel or suspend the member's teaching certificate. Before the committee hands down its decision, the teacher may voluntarily request that his or her certificate be cancelled.

The teacher, the superintendent or the ATA Executive Council may appeal the decision of the Professional Practice Review Committee to the Professional Practice Appeal Committee (also under the auspices of the ATA). The appeal committee may quash, vary or confirm the hearing committee's decision. It may also make its own decision or refer the case back to the hearing committee.

What about a complaint about unprofessional conduct?

The Executive Secretary of the ATA investigates the complaint. In extreme cases, the Executive Secretary may temporarily suspend the teacher's membership pending the outcome of the investigation. The member being investigated has the right to appeal the suspension to the Court of Queen's Bench.

Based on the outcome of the investigation, the Executive Secretary takes one of three possible actions:

- orders a formal hearing
- arranges for an invitation, which is an informal dispute resolution process.
- dismisses the complaint

If the case is referred to a hearing of the ATA's Professional Practice Review Committee, the hearing is open to the public unless the complainant or hearing committee requests privacy. If the committee determines that the member is guilty of unprofessional conduct,

it may issue a reprimand, cancel or suspend the member's ATA membership. It may also recommend that the Minister of Education cancel or suspend the member's teaching certificate and/or impose additional penalties, including a fine of up to $10,000.

The teacher or the ATA Executive Council may appeal the decision to the Professional Conduct Appeal Committee. The Professional Conduct Appeal Committee may quash, vary or confirm the hearing committee's decision. It may also make its own decision or refer the case back to the hearing committee.

The teacher may apply for a judicial review of the decision.

Unprofessional conduct involving an indictable offence[44]

Upon learning that a member has been convicted of an indictable offence, the ATA or Alberta Education, as appropriate, automatically initiates an investigation. All conduct hearings are open to the public unless the complainant or the Professional Practice Review Committee requests privacy. In extreme cases and where the situation warrants, the Executive Secretary of the ATA may temporarily suspend the teacher's ATA membership pending the outcome of the investigation. The member being investigated has the right to appeal the suspension to the Court of Queen's Bench.

The Professional Practice Review Committee considers penalties but not guilt (which is automatic in cases involving indictable offences). The committee may issue a reprimand, cancel or suspend the member's ATA membership, recommend that the Minister of Education cancel or suspend the member's teaching certificate and/or impose additional penalties, including a fine of up to $10,000.

Either the member or the ATA Executive Council may appeal the decision to the Professional Conduct Appeal Committee which may change the original decision. The member may apply for a judicial review of the decision.

The Board of Reference

Every province in Canada has some appeal mechanism for teachers facing termination or suspension. In Alberta the Board of Reference is an appeal process that was established in 1927 to resolve disputes between teachers and school boards about termination or suspension of a teacher's employment. An order that stems from a Board of Reference hearing must be filed with the Court of Queen's Bench and that order has the same force as an order of that Court. A teacher or a board that is the subject of a Board of Reference order may further appeal to the Court of Appeal.

44 Indictable offenses are more serious offences and include theft over $5,000, break and enter, aggravated sexual assault and murder. Maximum penalties for indictable offences vary and include life in prison. Some indictable offences have minimum penalties.

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